

Here for Medicine, There for Delight: The Ecclesial Mysteries of the Victorine Speculum

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HERE FOR MEDICINE,
THERE FOR DELIGHT:
THE ECCLESIAL MYSTERIES OF THE
VICTORINE *SPECULUM*

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**HERE FOR MEDICINE,
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ABSTRACT

The anonymous *Speculum de misteriis ecclesiae* from the 12th century abbey of St. Victor has often been associated with the tradition of medieval liturgical commentaries, but this dissertation proposes reading it primarily as a general treatise on the spiritual life. Its unique Victorine emphasis on the combination of intellect and affect suggests a particular theology of the sign: the real ontological status of the sign relying not on Dionysian hierarchy but on ecclesial contemplation. Through the newly developed sacramental understanding of *res et sacramentum*, the *Speculum* suggests that signs have enduring value as signs that goes beyond their function as signifiers. The attainment of the signified, in other words, is only part of their gift. Their “sweetness” is found in an appreciation of their mode of signification — a signification that, the *Speculum* suggests, endures somehow even in heaven as a non-necessary gracious source of delight. That is, external and visible things in the Church have value not merely because they point us to particular invisible things (what the signs “mean”) but because they teach us the Church’s economy of grace. The Church, then, and her sacramental economy, are central not just to the practical life of individual salvation, but to the meaningfulness of all creation.

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Abbreviations and Conventions

CCSL	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina
CCCM	Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Medievalis
PL	Patrologia Latina
VTT	Victorine Texts in Translation

Translations of scripture are either the Revised Standard Version (RSV) or Douay-Rheims (DR). Psalms referenced conform to the Vulgate numbering.

Liturgical references, unless otherwise noted, refer to chants, collects, and other texts of Roman Rite in the codified form promulgated by Trent (1570). English translations of Office texts come from *The Anglican Breviary* (Long Island: Frank Gavin, 1955), itself an English translation of the Tridentine office.

Additional medieval examples of the same texts can be found, with numerous manuscript references and images, in the online chant database, *Cantus*: cantus.uwaterloo.ca.

PART 1

MAPPING THE GROUND: THEMES, CONTEXT, AND GENRE

INTRODUCTION

“The sacred liturgy does not exhaust the entire activity of the Church”: it must be preceded by evangelization, faith, and conversion. It can then produce its fruits in the lives of the faithful: new life in the Spirit, involvement in the mission of the Church, and service to her unity.¹

The Catechism is careful to qualify its assertion of the liturgy’s central fruitfulness in the life of the Church with a reminder of its place in the whole Christian life. The liturgy’s fecundity — its ability to produce spiritual fruit — is not a given. It is not automatic or magical. If we can apply this principle to all the Church’s gifts, we will reach the main argument of this dissertation: that the Victorine *Speculum ecclesiae* gives a roadmap, so to speak, for utilizing the Church’s mysterious gifts to the end of personal and ecclesial growth, maturity, and spiritual delight. The Church’s mysteries, including not just her sacraments but her entire economy of signs, can produce fruit when we learn to appreciate them for what they are and *how* they are what they are. Investigation of these mysteries is not a tangential distraction from Christian discipleship but constitutes, rather, one of the primary means of spiritual growth.

The Speculum text itself

The *Speculum de misteriis ecclesiae*, a brief nine-chapter treatise of roughly nineteen thousand words, if it is known at all, is familiar to theologians, liturgists, and

¹ *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2012), 1072, quoting Vatican II, *Sacrosanctum concilium*, 9.

historians by virtue of its inclusion among the works of Hugh of St. Victor in Jacques-Paul Migne's *Patrologia Latina*.² Apart from some obvious typographical and reference errors, Migne's text seems basically reliable. I have provided a list of known manuscripts in the bibliography below, though it remains beyond the scope of this work to attempt any detailed comparison.

The book's short prologue is worth quoting in full:

Your Love invited me to treat the ecclesiastical sacraments and explain to you their mystical sweetness. But since, by right of custom, I would throw back, more willingly because more easily and more boldly, opinions logical rather than theological, I began to hesitate — whether you should be opposed, or whether rather I preferred to write. Soon, recalling truly that every good thing shared begins to shine more beautifully when it is shared, I turned to what is to be written with a pen, having invoked that same help *who opens and no one shuts, who closes and no one opens* (Rev. 3:7).³ And so the desired book, which, because in it one may examine what each thing mystically represents in the Church, it pleases me to call “Mirror of the Church,” flowing with interior nectar just as honey of the honeycomb, I have handed over⁴ to your intelligence.⁵

Despite the warm tone towards the work's commissioner (*vestra dilectio*), we do not have any further indication in the text as to who this anonymous sponsor is. The tone is, all the same, indicative of the book's style and content. The author may claim to be a logician rather than a theologian, but he comes across in the prologue as more of a pastor — a

² (Pseudo-)Hugh of St. Victor. *Speculum de mysteriis ecclesiae*, PL 177:335-380.

³ That is, the “key of David,” also found in the fourth of the Great O Antiphons leading up to Christmas.

⁴ *propinavi* is also a pun with nectar, since it can also mean to toast or to “give to drink.”

⁵ *Speculum*, PL 177:335A-B: “De sacramentis ecclesiasticis, ut tractarem, eorumque mysticam dulcedinem vobis exponerem, vestra rogavit dilectio. Cum autem libentius, quia facilius et audentius, logicas quam theologicas, jure consuetudinis, revolvam sententias: dubitare coepi, an contradicere, an potius scribere mallet. Mox vero illud recolens, quod omne bonum communicatum pulchrius elucescit, cum communicatur, consequenter stylum ad scribendum converti, ejus invocato auxilio, qui aperit et nemo claudit, claudit et nemo aperit (Apoc. III). Desideratum itaque libellum interno fluentem nectare, velut favum mellis, vestrae propinavi intelligentiae, quem quia in eo speculari licet quid mystice repraesentent singula in Ecclesia, Speculum Ecclesiae inscribi placuit.”

patient, sympathetic teacher who hopes that his words will be edifying for his readers, who seeks not to impart mere information but rather a deeper “interior nectar” that allows the Church’s mysteries to shine in the human heart with the warmth of divine love.

What follows then are nine chapters on the various *singula* in the Church’s life, outlined as follows:

- Chapter 1: The Church
- Chapter 2: The Dedication of the Church
- Chapter 3: The Offices of the Canonical Hours
- Chapter 4: The Service of the Whole Year
- Chapter 5: The Clerical Orders
- Chapter 6: The Sacred Vestments
- Chapter 7: The Celebration of the Mass
- Chapter 8: The Secrets of the Old and New Testaments
- Chapter 9: The Matter of Divine Scripture

In Chapter 1 the book treats the church building itself, offering allegorical or mystical explanations of individual architectural and decorative features. The central allegorical assumption in this chapter is that the church as *building* is a sign of the Church as *body*; detailed analysis of parts follows from this thesis. Chapter 2 deals with the liturgy of dedicating or consecrating the church building. Following the central allegory of the first chapter, this chapter’s work presents the service of dedication as an allegory of the Church’s corporate preparation or consecration for union with Christ as his bride. Chapters 3 and 4 treat, respectively, the canonical hours (the divine office) and the Church calendar. In both of these chapters the various observations of the Church’s prayer life, whether daily or yearly, represent an allegorical participation in salvation history. In other words, just as God has spoken and interacted with his people in time, so does the Church, in time, display and enact this interplay between eternity and temporality.

Chapters 5 and 6 turn to the seven clerical orders and the sacred vestments that clerics wear in the celebration of the liturgy. Here it seems clear that the author intends not merely a clerical audience, for the orders and their vesture are given spiritual interpretation to the effect that their spiritual substance can be demonstrated by the whole Church. The orders and their vestments each represent different aspects of Christ's identity; hence Christ's body as a whole can model these aspects spiritually even if they do not do so sacramentally.

Chapter 7, the longest in the book, considers the mass both in its ceremonial and its theological content. As in Chapters 3 and 4, the book shows how the Church's contemporary liturgy is a participation in God's whole work in history — not merely by way of a kind of symbolic dramatic reenactment, but rather through a real and substantial sacrament identifying the Church of the present with both Israel of the past and the glorious ecclesial Bride of the future. Liturgical actions do not “represent” things of the past in terms of pedagogical display but “represent” present entrance into those historical events. In the process of ceremonial exegesis the author turns to some of the 12th century's contemporary concerns over eucharistic theology, including the question of what it means for Jesus to say “this is my body.” He asserts a definite theology of real presence while claiming that this theology stands, like belief in the Trinity, in the territory of faith beyond the realm of dialectics. Ultimately this chapter stands as a meditation on the incarnation and the way that Christ is Lord over the world in a new way by assuming our human nature. Further, we see here a theme that I will draw out more fully in the chapters that follow, namely the consistent attention towards the “better” nature of redemption in relation to the intrinsic goodness of creation.

Chapters 8 and 9, the final sections of the work, are also the most derivative, drawing extensively from Hugh, the Lombard, and (especially through them) Augustine. They deal with, in the first instance, the “secrets” of the Old and New Testaments, and, in the second, the “matter” of divine scripture, which is the Holy Trinity. Chapter eight is therefore a short primer on how to read the Bible — focusing on how both “words” and “things” can signify in scripture — in a spiritual sense, while chapter nine is a short version of a creational (as in the Augustinian idea of *vestigia*) approach to the Trinity. These two chapters are, at first glance, oddly placed among the first seven parts of the *Speculum*. Considered as a whole, though, they support the *Speculum*’s ecclesial allegorizing through the recollection of traditional Biblical reading techniques. Further, they reinforce the assumption throughout the work that all “reading” is a work of spiritual and theological formation; that is, we read the Church’s signs not merely to understand them on a temporal level but to elevate the soul to the contemplation of God’s triune mystery.

Reception in contemporary scholarship

The *Speculum* has often been attributed to Hugh of St. Victor, as in Migne. To my knowledge no scholar today retains this attribution, largely because portions of the *Speculum*, especially the final chapter on Holy Scripture, rely heavily on concepts from Peter Lombard’s *Sentences* (c. 1156-1158), while Hugh died in 1141.⁶ The *terminus ad quem* of the work is the early 1160s, because Simon of Tournai copies from the *Speculum*

⁶ Christopher Evans, “Introduction” to selections from the *Speculum* in *Interpretation of Scripture: Theory*, Harkins, Franklin T. and Frans van Liere, eds, VTT 3 (Brepols, 2012), 482.

in his *Institutiones in sacram paginem*.⁷ Mary Schaefer has also pointed out that, given the way the *Speculum* discusses the Eucharist, the common use of the term “transubstantiation” provides a further *terminus ante quem* in the later 1160s.⁸ In the view of A. Franz, Hugh, whose writing was becoming well known, would not have withheld his name from the *Speculum* or confessed, as the author does, to being less of a theologian than a logician.⁹ Barthélemy Hauréau observed in the 19th century that the majority of *Speculum* manuscripts, as well as the oldest, have no attribution at all.¹⁰

The work’s association with Hugh does, however, have real warrant in theological content, as scholars have consistently recognized. The most extensively argued position in this regard is that of Henrich Weisweiler, who has shown the work’s dependent relationship with Laurence of Westminster’s *Sententiae de divinitate*, a *reportatio* of Hugh’s lectures which was, according to Laurence, approved by Hugh himself.¹¹ Aside from its clear dependence on Hugh (as well as the Lombard), there has been no conclusive study placing the *Speculum* at the Abbey of St. Victor. We are left, then, with the somewhat circumstantial evidence of Migne’s placement of the work with those of Hugh, as well as, perhaps more significantly, the Victorine provenance of most *Speculum*

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Mary Schaefer, “Twelfth Century Latin Commentaries on the Mass: Christological and Ecclesiological Dimensions” (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 1983), 319, ProQuest (8316729).

⁹ A. Franz, *Die Messe im deutschen Mittelalter* (Freiburg: Herder, 1902), 438. The reference to the author’s diffident confession comes from the Prologue, quoted above: “Cum autem libentius, quia facilius et audentius, logicas quam theologicas, jure consuetudinis, revolvam sententias: dubitare coepi, an contradicere, an potius scribere mallet” (PL 177.335A).

¹⁰ Barthélemy Hauréau, *Les oeuvres de Hughes de Saint-Victor: Essai critique* (Paris, 1886), 201.

¹¹ Weisweiler, Henrich, S.J., “Zur Einflussphäre der ‘Vorlesungen’ Hugos von St. Viktor,” 527 to 581 in Vol. 2 of *Mélanges Joseph de Ghellinck, SJ* (Gembloux: J. Duculot, 1951). Introduction (by Dale Coulter) and translation (by Christopher Evans with Hugh Feiss) of both the *Sentences* and Lawrence’s letter to Maurice on pp. 105-177 in *Trinity and Creation*, eds. Boyd Taylor Coolman and Dale M. Coulter (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2011).

manuscripts.¹² With no particular evidence to the contrary, scholars seem content to treat the *Speculum* as, at a bare minimum, having a direct relationship with the Abbey of St. Victor, regardless of its author's identity. For example, one of the recent volumes in the ongoing *Victorine Texts in Translation* series includes a partial translation of the *Speculum*'s final chapters, on Holy Scripture, as an instance of Victorine thought.¹³ More definitive proof, at this point, of the text's provenance and authorship is beyond the scope of the present essay. However, in chapter two below I argue that the assumption of a Victorine context offers a coherent heuristic approach to reading the text authentically on its own terms.

Aside from Weisweiler's article and discussions of Hugh's authorship, little has been written on the *Speculum* directly. It is habitually cited an example of 12th century commentary on the liturgy,¹⁴ or, in one case, as a key example of Victorine views of how the sequence chant functioned as a mystical sign in the liturgy.¹⁵ It is conceivable that problems of authorship and provenance have discouraged more prolonged engagement with the work. No critical edition or translation in a modern language has been published of the *Speculum*. Nor have there been any substantial attempts to answer the surface question of whether the *Speculum*'s commentary depends on a particular local (Victorine)

¹² A working list of manuscripts can be found in the bibliography below. Most of those in the Bibliothèque nationale latin collection come from the old library at St. Victor, whose contents are catalogued in Gibert Ouy, *Les manuscrits de l'abbay de Saint-Victor: Catalogue établi sur la base du repertoire de Claude de Grandrue (1514)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999).

¹³ See Christopher Evans' partial translation and introduction in *Intrpretation of Scripture*, 481-494.

¹⁴ For example, Gary Macy, *The Theologies of the Eucharist in the Early Scholastic Period: A Study of the Salvific Function of the Sacrament according to the Theologians c. 1080-1220* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984), 85ff and "Commentaries on the Mass During the Early Scholastic Period," 25-59 in *Medieval Liturgy: A Book of Essays*, ed. Lizette Larson-Miller (New York: Garland, 1997), 32ff. Further, two dissertations, by Douglas Mosey and Mary Schaefer, offer more significant engagement with the text. I will consider these in the third chapter below.

¹⁵ Margot Fassler, *Gothic Song: Victorine Sequences and Augustinian Reform in Twelfth-Century Paris* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 62.

liturgical use or on a broad experience of the Roman Rite.¹⁶ Such a comparison would prove difficult, even impossible, because in every case that I have found, liturgical texts quoted by the *Speculum* are those widely used in the Latin liturgies of the 12th century and beyond.¹⁷ Even if the author comes from a distinctively Victorine context, he seems keen to allow for ceremonial variations, such as the singing of long *pneumas* without words, a practice followed in “certain churches.”¹⁸ If the *Speculum* truly represents a Victorine mode of thought, it does so not because of the Victorine liturgy proper, but because of the Victorine understanding of the liturgy and the role of the Church’s mysteries in the Christian life. As a whole, the claim of Victorine provenance proves significant for the *Speculum* by providing ancillary evidence for my interpretation of the *Speculum*’s symbolic and theological vision. In the context of Victorine life, a work of mystical formation is more likely and fitting than a compendium of allegorical explanation.

¹⁶ A key text in comparison is the critical edition of the customary of the Abbey, the *Liber ordinis ordinis Sancti Victoris Parisiensis*, CCCM 61, ed. Lucas Jocqué and Ludovicus Milis (Turnhout: Brepols, 1984). The *Liber ordinis* provides excellent insight on the day-to-day liturgical life of the Abbey. It does not, however, itself contain liturgical texts. There are also many sequences that come from the Abbey, which have been listed, analyzed, and translated by Margot Fassler, Juliet Mousseau, and Jean Grosfillier. There has not been any comprehensive attempt to describe the Victorine liturgy as a whole, though Margot Fassler provides a helpful introduction of the relevant manuscripts in her article “The Victorines the Medieval Liturgy” in Feiss and Mousseau’s edited volume, *A Companion to the Abbey of Saint Victor in Paris* (Brill, 2017), 389-421.

¹⁷ Indeed most are easy to find in the liturgical books of the Catholic Church prior to the Second Vatican Council.

¹⁸ *Speculum*, 359C.

Outline of the dissertation

I intend to argue that the *Speculum* presents a mode of Christian growth centered on spiritual investigation of the Church's mysteries. Rather than providing explanations of what certain signs mean, then, the *Speculum* shows how the investigations into meaning are themselves a fruitful spiritual exercise that uncovers the deeper "sweetness" of the Church's life in the world and teaches us how to enjoy that sweetness for the sake of the life to come.

The first part of the dissertation gives an overview of the work's themes, context, and genre. In Chapter 1, I argue that the *Speculum*'s invitation to ecclesial "sweetness" relies on a particular theology of the sign that finds its reality in the process of speculative contemplation. Here I consider the two principle traditions of the sign represented by Augustine and Dionysius. I argue that the *Speculum*'s own system, while not actually influenced by the Dionysian corpus, offers a substantially more "real" ontological status to the sign than granted by mainstream Augustinian thought. Rather than a Dionysian hierarchy of ontic symbols, though, the *Speculum*'s realism finds its home in the Church's affective-intellectual life. This life is articulated, I argue, from ground opened up by Hugh in the sacramental theology of *res et sacramentum*. At the close of the chapter, I consider the title mirror metaphor in light of these commitments, suggesting that the whole work is a "mirror" in its emphasis on an ascetical, intellectual, and affective process of maturity and growth.

In Chapter 2, I consider the context of the abbey of St. Victor, arguing that a correct reading of the *Speculum* requires attention to certain key Victorine themes, namely the centrality of history, attention to detail, and holiness of life. Chapter 3 then

turns to the question of genre. I question the typical interpretation of the *Speculum* as a liturgical commentary, carrying forward the argument from Chapter 1 on the value of signs. Here, in comparison with other commentaries, as well as modern conceptions of liturgical meaning, I argue again that “explanation” is the wrong category for the *Speculum*’s work. In the process of this genre critique, I propose an approach to medieval liturgy that refuses its strict segregation from theology, devotion, and everyday life. For the *Speculum*, the Church’s mysteries do concern, primarily, the “liturgy” and ceremonial-ritual life of the Church, but, as a spiritual roadmap for the Christian life, the work of speculation extends beyond the liturgy to everything that the Church and her members do in the world.

In the second part of the dissertation, I turn to various theological foci as a way of getting into the core of the *Speculum*’s unique theological method. Chapter 4 considers Trinity, creation, and Church from the angle of the first part’s theology of signs. What emerges is a strong ecclesiological emphasis: it is only in and through the Church that creation becomes “significant.” That is, the apparent universal symbolism of the *Speculum* assumes not that all created things are intrinsic signs but that the Church, as Christ’s means of grace in the world, is able to gather up all things in creation and consecrate them to further significance.

Chapter 5 deals with the Incarnation and salvation, while Chapter 6 deals with eschatology. Together these final two chapters argue for a scheme of salvation history always oriented *in melius*. That is, salvation consists not simply in restoration of what was lost, but the construction and growth of something new and more beautiful. Further, this growth continues in heaven. The *Speculum*’s theology of the sign, I argue, is

grounded in its eschatological vision, for the “sweetness” of signs foreshadows not the end of signs but their consummation. While, in heaven, sacraments and other signs are no longer necessary for medicine, they remain, mysteriously perfected, “for delight.”

CHAPTER 1 THE SWEETNESS OF SIGNS

My central claim is that, for the *Speculum*, the Church's mysteries are read not only for understanding, but also — to return to the language of the prologue — to savor their “mystical sweetness.”¹ We become wise, following Isidore's definition, by learning what tastes good.² And so knowledge of the Church's mysteries must entail both learning about the meaning of signs and learning how to receive and appreciate the mystical sweetness of those signs. The full understanding of the Church's mysteries includes both intellect and affect — both understanding and delight. Taste, that is, affective desire, must be re-formed so that the mystical sweetness can be fully received: “O taste, and see that the Lord is sweet” (Ps. 33:9, DR).³

The *Speculum* is at every point a book concerned with signs: symbols, sacraments, mysteries, and allegorical connections both straightforward and fanciful. My task in this chapter is to offer a coherent description of the work's overall system of signification. What, after all, does it mean for a thing to signify another thing, and is it necessary, according to the *Speculum*, to make distinctions about different kinds of signs and different kinds of meanings? I will argue that the *Speculum* gives real ontological weight to signs founded less on a hierarchized natural symbolism than on the ecclesial and individual spiritualization of things beyond their strict signification. The “sweetness”

¹ Ibid., 335A. See Introduction, n. 4.

² “Wise (*sapiens*), so called from taste (*sapor*), because as the sense of taste is able to discern the taste of food, so the wise person is able to distinguish things and their causes, because he understands each thing, and makes distinctions with his sense of truth. The opposite of this is a fool (*insipiens*), because he is without taste, and has no discretion or sense.” Isidore, *Etymologies*, S.240.

³ Taste is a common trope in medieval commentary. See Rachel Fulton, “‘Taste and see that the Lord is sweet’ (Ps. 33:9): The Flavor of God in the Monastic West,” *The Journal of Religion* 86.2 (April 2006), 169-204.

of signs, then, denotes the intrinsic goodness and giftedness of the Church's signifying economy; they are sweet not simply by virtue of what they signify but by virtue of the signifying activity itself. The *Speculum*'s primary aim then is less to show what signs mean than to teach the reader how to savor the means of signification.

In what follows, I begin with an initial look at the text before backing up into some historical and contextual questions of terminological development. I then return to a fuller restatement of my thesis on the sweetness of signs followed by a deeper analysis of the initial textual example and a consideration of how the work's title image reinforces my thesis.

I. Spiritualizing the sign (or not)

One of the *Speculum*'s fuller discussions on sacramental signification occurs in the sixth chapter, "On the sacred vestments." Somewhat surprisingly, the text argues that anyone "can have the effect of the sacraments in himself spiritually."⁴ The clerical orders are signs of spiritual things, and, as such, it is possible to participate in their spiritual reality without participating in the sign: anyone who introduces someone to the Church is spiritually a doorkeeper; anyone who teaches morals is a lector; anyone who prays is an exorcist; anyone who illuminates is an acolyte; anyone who shows humility is a subdeacon; anyone who exhorts others is a deacon; anyone who offers himself to God is a priest. At first glance, this passage appears to imply a view of sacramental signs (in this case the sacrament of order) limited to the two-sided distinction between a sign and meaning or reality (*res*). The "real" import of the order of doorkeepers, in this view,

⁴ *Speculum*, 355C: "Potest enim quilibet in se spiritualiter habere effectum sacramentorum."

would be the spiritual act of welcome. Taken further, we might assert that the sacrament is of little value once its meaning has been discerned; or, alternately, that such a discovery (or *gnosis*) is the essential step of Christian maturity leading beyond the letter to the spirit. The *Speculum* as a whole might then be seen (as it has often been seen) as an instruction book on deciphering certain ecclesiastical codes whose true significance is not on the level of visible manifestation but that of certain invisible truths.

To this theoretical spiritualizing interpretation, two responses need to be made. First, the *Speculum*, as Mary Schaefer argues, presents for its time a strong, even novel, emphasis on the work of the priesthood, being one of the first works to insist on the “power of offering” and the priest’s “representative” capacity for the Church.⁵ For Schaefer, the *Speculum* stands at the crucial turning point between a more Christocentric and ecclesial model of the eucharistic sacrifice and a late medieval emphasis on the role of the priest alone. I believe that Schaefer’s thesis is overstated, not least because of the “spiritual priesthood” passage quoted above; nevertheless, her description of the *Speculum*’s emphasis on the priesthood is correct to the extent that it guards against an overly spiritualized reading of ordination. The fact that there is a “spiritual priesthood” available to the laity does not, for the *Speculum*, in any way remove the necessity and the gift of sacramental priests.

The second warrant against wholesale spiritualization comes from the text immediately following the discussion on the spiritual interpretation of clerical orders:

It is therefore manifest that, the signifieds without the signifiers, that is the virtues without the exterior sacraments, justify regardless; moreover, the ones without the others [i.e. the exterior sacraments without the virtues] are of no internal profit, indeed they convict. All the same, having been

⁵ Mary Schaefer, “Twelfth Century Latin Commentaries” (PhD diss.), 330-336.

joined, they seem to bring about a greater good, because, while to some degree something is added to it, the whole is more effective. But is it then possible that the good would be greater when neither good is divided? To which we say that it is good when they are not divided, yet at the same time when they are. And either way it is good, and thus the whole is well known to be a greater good, that as an example it might shine briefly but at a great height. It was great that the Virgin Mary bore Christ corporeally with love (*amore*) added, which was not divided; yet, it was greater that through love (*dilectionem*) she spiritually carried him. And, because she merited to have it both ways at the same time, she merited the existence of an incomparable felicity, for often, as the external gift is joined, a greater inner charity flames up and increases merit.⁶

This passage is, I argue, a useful interpretative key for the *Speculum*'s overall vision of sacramental signs. On the one hand, there is the acknowledgment of order: the spiritual, the virtuous, the invisible, is *better*, in a substantial way, than the external sign. Virtues without external signs just are good, whether or not they are signified by something else (like a sacrament). Further, sacraments bereft of their virtue, their meaning, their power, are unprofitable and even dangerous. On the other hand, there is a clear sense here of something wonderful — an “incomparable felicity,” even — associated with the conjunction of sign and signified, of exterior and interior. Surely, if this is true, one

⁶ *Speculum*, 356A-B. “Manifestum est ergo quod significata sine significantibus, id est virtutes sine exterioribus sacramentis quandoque justificant; haec autem sine illis nihil penitus prosunt, imo arguunt. Simul vero juncta majus bonum conferre videntur, quia dum aliquid alicui additur, totum majus efficitur. Sed nunquid ideo magis bonum, cum non utrumque divisum bonum sit? Ad quod dicimus quod bonum sit, licet non divisum, tamen cum simul sunt, utrumque bonum est, et ideo totum majus esse bonum patet, ut in exemplo brevi claret, sed excelso. Virginera Mariam corporaliter Christum portare magnum fuit adjuncto amore, quod non esset divisum; etiam [Col.0356B] majus fuit quod per dilectionem spiritualiter ipsum portabat. Sed quia utrumque meruit habere simul, incomparabiliter felix meruit existere, quia saepe pro donis externis collatis charitas intus magis flammescit et meritum crescit.” The notion of Mary’s double dignity or merit in both spiritual and corporal birth is reflected very similarly in a sermon by Godfrey of St. Victor: “She is first both in dignity and in time. In dignity, because she merited giving birth not only spiritually but also bodily to the Word of God divinely sent into her. Other holy and chaste virgins have merited to conceive and give birth to the divine Word breathed into their souls spiritually from heaven... but this unique, singular, incomparable virgin brought forth for the salvation of the world the one Word of God wholly poured into her through the working of the Holy Spirit not only as we said, spiritually but also bodily and personally in an ineffable way.” See Godfrey of St. Victor, “Sermon on the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin,” trans. Hugh Feiss in *Writings on the Spiritual Life*, ed. Christopher Evans (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 2014), 491-2.

cannot simply abandon the sign for the sake of its related virtue. Is it possible, then, that the value of this treatise's allegorizing impulse is not ultimately exhausted through the discovery and imparting of spiritual meaning? Tantalizingly, the above passage suggests that it is not. A greater merit is possible. But to understand how this is possible, we need a better grasp of the terms.

II. Signs, Symbols, and Sacraments

Marie-Dominique Chenu asks, near the start of his essay, "The Symbolist Mentality,"

How can one write the history of Christian doctrines, let alone that of theological science, without taking into consideration this recourse to symbols — to symbols drawn from nature, from history, from liturgical practice — which continually nourished both doctrine and theology?⁷

Père Chenu's rhetorical question remains a good one, and it stands as the first step in treating the *Speculum* as a theological work. While on the surface it may seem that the *Speculum* is concerned with what liturgical things mean, it is not entirely clear what the *Speculum* means when it says that things "signify" other things; for, as in our example above, the author seems to think at times that signification itself is worth something more than merely what it signifies. How can the Epistle "represent" the preaching of John the Baptist?⁸ If it does so by literal similarity of order, how exactly can the time period between Septuagesima and Easter also "represent" the time between Adam and Moses

⁷ Marie-Dominique Chenu, O.P., *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century: Essays on New Theological Perspectives in the Latin West*, trans. and ed. Jerome Taylor and Lester K. Little (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 101.

⁸ 358B: "Epistola quae Orationem sequitur, praedicationem Joannis Baptistae repraesentat."

“when death reigned”?⁹ How can the dome of the church “signify” perfection,¹⁰ and does it do so in the same way that the process of singing an antiphon “signifies” how we respond to the fact that God loved us first?¹¹ The vocabulary, like that of many 12th century contemporaries, resists easy simplification and systematization; the author refrains from giving readers clear and precise definitions of things in a way that we might expect a mere fifty years later in the flourishing of scholastic method.

In this section my goal then is to state as clearly as possible how the symbolic vocabulary in the *Speculum* works. This entails an examination of the internal mechanics of the terminology and how that terminology relates to the general usage of the period. It may seem obvious to assert that there is no stable, universal diction for symbolic experience in the 12th century; it is quite another thing to attempt reading a text without resorting to such generalizations. I will argue that the *Speculum* presents a mode of signification that is neither purely “Augustinian” nor “Dionysian” (to use Chenu’s broad dichotomy), but distinctively Victorine. That is, the *Speculum* discovers in the Hugonian elaboration of the *res et sacramentum* a kind of ontologically-weighted sign distinct from and yet related to the efficacious signs called sacraments. All signs, at least potentially, fall into this category, yet for the *Speculum* I suggest that their ontological weight is founded precisely in their subjective value. Rather than merely arbitrary links from one

⁹ 348D: “Item a Septuagesima, usque ad Pascha repraesentat tempus ab Adam usque ad Moysen, in quo mors regnavit.”

¹⁰ 336B: “perfectionem per rotunditatem significat, quoniam perfecte et inviolate fides catholica praedicanda est et tenenda.”

¹¹ 341D: “Quod ab uno singulariter incipitur antiphona et a caeteris communiter cantatur significat quod Deus prior dilexit nos, et nos dilectioni ejus communiter respondere debemus.”

thing to another, signs participate in what they signify insofar as they enable the human soul's participation in something outside itself.

Augustine and Dionysius

If Chenu's observations hold, the 12th century "symbolist mentality" comprised first a conviction "that all natural or historical reality possessed a *signification* which transcended its crude reality and which a certain symbolic dimension of that reality would reveal to man's mind."¹² But this conviction, he argues, took on two significantly different forms, which can be loosely characterized as Augustinian and Dionysian. For the former, signs are like writing, and even if they are somehow secret or mysterious, their intent is to communicate something else. Like writing, they rely on social conventions or human concepts for intelligibility.¹³ A personal name, in this view, is a sign of a person by virtue of social convention: a set of phonemes or a set of visible markings "mean" a specific human being simply because they have been arbitrarily assigned to that person in the course of history. A name is fundamentally a matter of convenience, a matter of utility — it is not a substantial, ontic reality but merely the temporal reference to such a reality.

For the Dionysian view, all things contain within their own nature a symbolic reality, an inner dynamism integral to the hierarchical constitution of all things in relation to God. While Dionysian symbols may be "signs" referring to other things (above all God), their identity as signs is not conventional or arbitrary but inherent in their nature: "The symbol was the true and proper expression of reality; nay more, it was through such

¹² Chenu, 102.

¹³ Chenu, 126.

symbolization that reality fulfilled itself.”¹⁴ Things point to other things not merely out of convenience or utility but by virtue of their ontological identity. Being connects to being, and no level, no place, in the hierarchy of being is ultimately untouched by the whole. Names, in the Dionysian understanding, are not merely names, but glimpses into the true realities that they signify. Symbols signify other things by participation rather than by social convention or human intellect.

Chenu acknowledges that “the two strains were continually crossed and are difficult to distinguish, as one can even see before 1150 in Hugh of Saint-Victor, that master of the sacraments and sacramentalism who was responsive to pseudo-Dionysian modes of thought while remaining basically Augustinian.”¹⁵ Even by his own description, then, we dare not take Chenu’s dichotomy as an absolute rule of description and comparison, especially when it comes to the Victorine context. All the same, these two prime sources of conceptual background set the stage for any consideration of terminological precision in the *Speculum* as a work of 12th century theology.

The language of symbols

Commenting on the Pseudo-Dionysius, Hugh of St. Victor famously defines “symbol” as *collatio videlicet, id est coaptatio visibilium formarum ad demonstrationem rei invisibilis propositarum*, which Bernard McGinn renders as “a bringing together, that is, a fitting together of visible forms used to display something invisible,” while Chenu

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., 125. Though he may have been “responsive” to Pseudo-Dionysius, Paul Rorem suggests that Hugh was not really influenced by Dionysian thought in any decisive way: “As Poirel concludes, there are no sudden signs of Dionysian influence in Hugh’s corpus, no new vocabulary or specific themes or overall theological orientation.” Paul Rorem, *Hugh of Saint Victor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 171. See also Rorem, “The Early Latin Dionysius: Eriugena and Hugh of St. Victor” (*Modern Theology* 24.4), 601-614.

prefers to import Hugh's word "coaptation," though he agrees with Bernard McGinn that, in context, "display" is more appropriate than "demonstrate."¹⁶ Hugh's definition does seem to constitute, as Chenu rightly points out, an Augustinian appropriation of a Dionysian word. It lacks the deep mysticism which asserts the abiding reality of symbols beyond their active power on human psychology. For Hugh, the symbol's status as *coaptatio* brings it into the category of human conceptual utility rather than the realm of mystical participation. Symbols are not intrinsic natural realities but distinctly human realities of value for the human mind. Through Hugh, at least, it would seem that the Victorine view remains decidedly Augustinian, focusing on useful "signs" even while employing the language of "symbols" on occasion. My present question is whether the *Speculum* maintains this commitment, or whether it presses back in a more Dionysian direction.

Unlike Hugh, though, the *Speculum* seems unaware of the word "symbol," at least in its Dionysian connotations: the word *symbolum* is used only twice in the *Speculum*, both times with the older Latin meaning, taken from Greek usage, of symbol as creed, that is, the *symbolum fidei*.¹⁷ Nor does the text speak of things happening "symbolically," or of things "symbolizing." The word is totally absent.

The language actually employed in the *Speculum* is not, then, "symbolic," at least in a literal way. The text remains thoroughly within the Augustinian or Western tradition: a thing can signify (*significo* – 117 instances), express (*exprimo* — 19 instances), beckon (*innuo* — 16 instances), commemorate (*commemoro* — 13 instances), or designate

¹⁶ Hugh of St. Victor, *Commentariorum in Hierarchiam Coelestem*, PL 175:960D; Bernard McGinn, *The Growth of Mysticism* (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 375; Chenu, 103.

¹⁷ *Speculum*, 344B and 345C.

(*designo* — 7 instances), though in many other instances (too difficult to count) a thing just *is* another thing. Insinuating adverbs (*mystice*, *mysterialement*, *spiritualmente*) may color the “symbolic” import of the verb *esse*, or a thing may be or express a *mysterium*, but more often it stands alone, as in the altar vestments which “are the saints, concerning whom the prophet speaks to God saying, *You shall put them all on as an ornament.*”¹⁸ The text does employ the word *figuro*, but exclusively in the sense of “prefiguring.” So liturgical actions do not “figure” other things; other things of past history and scripture “figure” the liturgical actions and sacraments. For example, the Hebrews’ departure from Babylon “figures” the mystical eschatological return to Jerusalem, which is further “designated” by the “captivity” of Septuagesimatide.¹⁹

The most unusual and interesting word used in this overall “symbolic” vocabulary is the verb *mystico*, which occurs nine times in the *Speculum*. A word search in Migne reveals a mere 22 instances in that entire patristic-medieval library; granted that the *Patrologia Latina* is neither a complete nor a completely reliable textual record, it is fitting that the *Speculum* shows up as an example in one of the few dictionary entries on the word, that of the *Lexicon latinitas medii aevi*, where Albert Blaise defines it as “to figure, to signify, to contain with a mystical sense.”²⁰ The other instances in the *Patrologia Latina* also come from the 12th century. For example, Gerhoh of Reichersberg, a regular canon like the Victorines, writes in his commentary on the psalms

¹⁸ Ibid., 337B, quoting Isaiah 49:18 (Migne incorrectly notes Isaiah 59).

¹⁹ Ibid., 347B.

²⁰ “Mystico, mysticare,” Albert Blaise, *Lexicon latinitas medii aevi* (accessed through the Brepols Database of Latin Dictionaries). Blaise omits it from his French reference work *Le vocabulaire latin des principaux thèmes liturgiques* (Brepols, 1970), though he does include the adverb *mystice*, defined as “symboliquement, allégoriquement, d’une manière mystique” (74).

that the different aspects of David's harp "each mystically signify (*mysticant*) a certain thing to us."²¹ The *Speculum* uses *mysticat* synonymously with the phrase *significat mystice*, which is how I will normally translate it, rather than suggesting the (tempting) novel word "mysticate": "The white veil mystically signifies (*mysticat*) the joy of immortality, concerning which the Son exults in the Father, saying: *You have cut off my sackcloth, and compassed me with gladness.*"²²

Despite the unique frequency of the verb *mystico*, I have been unable to find any consistent pattern to clearly delineate, with the exception of *figura/figura*, the way these different terms are used in the *Speculum*. No consistent context distinction is made between physical objects, actions, and persons, between allegorical-historical meanings (except perhaps in the use of *commemoro* as a term clearly referencing a past event), moral meanings, spiritual-sacramental meanings, and eschatological meanings. A person may just as well "signify" as an object, and what it signifies may be an idea, an historical event, an eschatological hope, or a spiritual reality. Thus it is most likely that the author simply varies *significo*, *designo*, *exprimo*, etc. for the sake of rhetorical variety. In this rather mundane observation, however, there is a significant point: *all* of the words include, by association, the sense of "mystical" meaning conveyed most clearly by *mystico*. The interchangeability of terminology is too persistent to ignore. The various meanings, significations, designations, are all both "mystical" and "spiritual," whether or not they are explicitly so labeled.

²¹ Gerhoh, *Commentarius Aureas in Psalmos et Cantica Ferialia*, PL 193:629B.

²² *Speculum*, 340C; Psalm 29:12.

This is an important assertion, because it might be assumed at this point that the lack of clear Dionysian “symbol” language means that all the signifying terms in the *Speculum* reduce, in the final analysis, to a more Latin system of arbitrary referential signifiers and signifieds. It is precisely such an assumption that has allowed many a casual reader to lump the *Speculum* into the wide generic field of medieval liturgical commentaries whose work is the explanation of mysteries, the explication of what the liturgy and the Church’s mysteries “mean.”²³ I propose, on the contrary, to interpret even the most bare language of “signs” in the *Speculum* as participatory in the more “mysterious” content evoked by the language of Dionysian symbolism, which is not to say that the work is influenced by Dionysius, but simply that it has no need of Dionysian tradition to assume, as it does, that all signs are “mystical,” that they are symbols whose referentiality does not exhaust their value.²⁴

A sign is, at its most basic definition, something that signifies something else.²⁵ Given the copious use of the term “signify” in the *Speculum*, it is clear by implication that anything that signifies is a sign, even if it is not directly so named. The work is concerned particularly with the Church’s “mysteries.” Can the two terms be distinguished? At times the author uses them so closely together that it is difficult to say. We “sign ourselves” with the cross to imitate “this mystery, that God has lowered the heavens and descended, to teach us to prefer eternal things to temporal things.”²⁶ The

²³ This thorny question of *genre* will be considered more thoroughly in Chapter 3.

²⁴ See my n. 15 above on Rorem’s negative judgment concerning clear Dionysian influence in Hugh.

²⁵ *Speculum*, 376C: “Res hic dicuntur quae non habent significare signa quae habent.”

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 338A: “Dum autem signamus nos a fronte deorsum, deinde a sinistra ad dexteram, illud exprimimus mysterium, quod Deus inclinavit coelos et descendit, ut doceret praeferre aeterna temporalibus.”

“sign” of the cross is not a sign that points to the cross, in this case, but ultimately to the “mystery” of the Incarnation. In the same section (a brief meditation on the fact of the Church’s adornment), the author reminds us, quoting from the hymn *Vexilla regis*, that the cross itself contains a mystery that shines forth.²⁷ Signs can point to mysteries, but those signs (like the cross) can also *be* mysteries. Many things are mysteries, in fact: the Trinity²⁸, the door of the Church²⁹, the number six³⁰, the kingdom of God³¹, even the bishop’s slippers.³² What these things have in common is not that they are “signs” — though for some it is their “signifying” that makes them mysterious, as in the case of episcopal slippers — but that they can be understood more deeply through a process of unveiling and investigation. The Trinity is, above all, not a sign, but the ultimate *res* beyond created *res*; yet, like episcopal slippers, the Trinity cannot be easily understood.

Might we say, simply, that all signs are, for the *Speculum*, implicitly “mysterious” in some extended way? In other words, is it possible to assert a fundamentally real (and not arbitrary or conventional) content to the “mystery” of signs beyond their mundane “mystery” vis-à-vis their interpretation in time? Can the intrinsically mysterious possibilities of signs — that is, as a kind of language that conveys one from ignorance to knowledge (in the way that a 21st century person not involved in theological jargon might speak of a word or phrase as “a mystery” before it is understood) — disclose a deeper “symbolic” mystery that is more closely related to the economy of sacramental signs?

²⁷ Ibid.: “De qua dicitur: Vexilla regis prodeunt, fulget crucis mysterium.”

²⁸ Ibid., 338C, 374A

²⁹ Ibid., 339A.

³⁰ Ibid., 350C.

³¹ Ibid., 354A.

³² Ibid., 354B.

The language of the treatise seems to support such a reading, but it remains to be seen what exactly it means for signs to be “mysterious” if we cannot categorize this meaning fully in the Dionysian tradition of ontological symbolism. Making the necessary distinctions will require an investigation into distinctive Victorine trends in sacramental theology. From that investigation we can propose a contextually-informed thesis on the *Speculum*’s operative assumptions about the mystical nature of signs.

Res et sacramentum

Before delving into the Victorine sacramental context, a brief look at the *Speculum*’s use of the term *sacramentum* will be useful in showing what is at stake. The word *sacramentum* is used most regularly in reference to what modern convention calls the sacraments (baptism, Eucharist, etc.), though the prologue makes clear that its entire subject matter is “the ecclesiastical sacraments,” allowing for the kind of broader traditional usage.³³ For example, the Incarnation is spoken of as a sacrament in specific comparison to the sacrament of the altar.³⁴ This particular description, taken from Hugh, is instructive for a broad definition of sacraments as the “coaptation” (to use Hugh’s term for symbols) of an exterior sign and an inner truth or virtue. The Incarnation is a “sacrament” here not because it has a visible form and a spiritual “meaning,” but simply because it describes both an outer (humanity) and an inner (divinity) reality. The eucharistic species is then described as the *signum* pointing to an interior *virtus* and

³³ Ibid., 335A: “De sacramentis ecclesiasticis, ut tractarem, eorumque mysticam dulcedinem vobis exponerem, vestra rogavit dilectio.”

³⁴ Ibid., 376B-C: “Ut in sacramento Verbi incarnati duo inveniuntur, humanitas et divinitas: et in sacramento corporis Domini, species exterior signum est, res interior veritas et virtus, id est corpus Domini et gratia quam soli boni percipient.”

veritas. Even though, a few lines later, the author will repeat the Hugonian/Augustinian distinction between signs and things, here a sign is simply the “exterior” part of a twofold matter.³⁵ Surely neither the *Speculum* author nor Hugh would wish to say that the divinity is the “meaning” of the sacrament of the Incarnation in a way that denied the humanity of Christ; nor would the dogmatic suggestion that Christ’s divinity is better, in every transcendent way, than his human nature, amount to a lessening of a true and abiding human substance taken from the Virgin Mary.

As I suggested above, the description of the Incarnation as “sacrament” precludes a strong use of the newly recovered Aristotelian terminology of “form,” “matter,” and hylomorphic theory. Whatever the sacraments are for the *Speculum*, they resist the kind of categorization that becomes necessary, in the eucharistic controversies of the high middle ages, to settle scholastic questions about when, where, and why grace happens. Nowhere is there a concern over validity or intention. The sacraments “signify,” but the *Speculum* does not habitually speak of them as “signs.”³⁶

Augustine had written that sacraments are “symbols (*signacula*) of divine realities.”³⁷ Following that tradition, Isidore’s *Etymologies* taught that things

are called sacraments (*sacramentum*) for this reason, that under the covering of corporeal things the divine virtue very secretly brings about the saving power of those same sacraments – whence from their secret (*secretus*) or holy (*sacer*) power they are called sacraments.³⁸

³⁵ Ibid.: “Res ergo interior veritas vel virtus dicitur, res exterior signum.”

³⁶ Unlike the verb *significare*, the noun *signum* (apart from specific references to the ritual sign of the cross) does not appear at all until the Augustinian-Hugonian final chapters on Scripture.

³⁷ Augustine, *Instructing Beginners in Faith*, trans. Raymond Canning (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2006), 26, 50.

³⁸ Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*, trans. Stephen A. Barney, W.J. Lewis, J.A. Beach, and Oliver Berghof (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006), VI.xix.39 (148-9).

In this tradition it is the “bringing about” of power, the efficaciousness of the sign, that justifies their description as “sacrament” rather than merely sign. This general definition fits again the *Speculum*’s example of the Incarnation as well as the Eucharist: the secret divine power under the cover of humanity brings about salvation just as the secret divine power under the species of bread brings about union with the Body. In the context of the chapters on Scripture, this conception likewise fits the dual “matter” of Scripture, the visible and the invisible. The visible is “useful,” following Augustine’s teaching from the *De Doctrina Christiana*, which suggests less a flippancy towards signs than a valorization of their true purpose. If the Incarnation is a sacrament, and its exterior element the sign, it is precisely in and through this inescapable sign that God the Son can be met and adored.

Hugh considers, however, a more proper definition of the sacraments in his *De Sacramentis*, suggesting that the fullest definition includes three things: a sensible similitude to what is signified, an institution ordering it to this signification, and the sanctifying ability to effect it.³⁹ Sacraments thus remain for Hugh in the broader category of signs, but they represent a particular instance in that category, not merely in the holiness of what they signify but more properly in the holiness of their mode of signification. To use a famous example, St. Patrick’s three-leaf shamrock may bear a superficial similitude to the Trinity, and is therefore a kind of vestigial sign of the three-in-one; it is not, however, a *sacramental* sign, for it lacks both divine institution and efficient power.

³⁹ Hugh, *De Sacramentis* 1.9.2 (PL 176:381B-C).

Hugh's interest in more precise sacramental terminology reflects the spirit of his age.⁴⁰ In the 12th century, theologians wrestling with the patristic heritage posed controversial new questions on sacramental definitions, especially regarding the Eucharist.⁴¹ Scholars of medieval symbolism and sacramental theory have argued that Hugh stands at the cusp of a revised understanding of the sacraments, especially when it comes to the Eucharist.⁴² In Book Two of his *De Sacramentis*, Hugh elaborates not two but three items of import in the sacrament:

For although the sacrament is one, three distinct things are set forth there, namely, visible appearance, truth of body, and virtue of spiritual grace. For the visible species which is perceived visibly is one thing, the truth of body and blood which under visible appearance is believed invisibly another thing, and the spiritual grace which with body and blood is received invisibly and spiritually another.⁴³

He repeats this concept in another way in the next section:

Accordingly, the virtue and the fullness of the spiritual refection which is in the body and blood of Christ is signified through the appearance of bread and wine; but it is perfected in the reception of grace by the infusion of internal and eternal reflection. So, although the three are there in one, in the first is found the sign of the second, but in the second the cause of the third, in the third truly the virtue of the second and the truth of the first, and these three are in one and are one sacrament.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ For a more thorough overview of Hugh's understand of the term *sacramentum*, see Dominique Poirel, "Sacrament" in Feiss and Mousseau, *A Companion to the Abbey of Saint Victor in Paris* (Brill, 2017), 277-297.

⁴¹ See Mosey, "Allegorical Liturgical Interpretation in the West from 800 AD to 1200 AD" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 1985), ProQuest NL28128, 201 and Nicholas Haring, "Berengar's Definitions of *Sacramentum* and Their Influence on Medieval Sacramentology," *Medieval Studies* 10 (1948), 109-146; Paul Palmer, "The Theology of the *Res and Sacramentum* with particular Emphasis on its Application to Penance," *Proceedings of the XIV Annual Convention of the Catholic Theological Society of America* (New York, 1960), 120-141; Henri de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum: The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages*, trans. Gemma Simmonds (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 2006), 168ff.

⁴² See, for example, Mosey, 203; Thomas Finn, "The Sacramental World in the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard," *Theological Studies* 69 (2008), 568; Palmer, "The Theology of the *Res and Sacramentum*," 122.

⁴³ Hugh of St. Victor, *On the Sacraments of the Christian Faith* (trans. Roy Deferrari, ed. Joseph Saint-George, Ex Fontibus, 2016), 2.8.7, 308-9.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 2.8.8, 310. PL 176:467D: "Virtus ergo et plenitudo spiritualis refectionis, quae in corpore Christi et sanguine est, per speciem quidem panis et vini significatur; in perceptione autem gratiae, infusione internae et aeternae refectionis perficitur. Et sic quidem cum tria in uno ibi sint; in primo quidem

The *Speculum* echoes the language of this second excerpt almost verbatim: “The first is a sign of the second; the second, the cause of the third; the third, the virtue of the second and the truth of the first.”⁴⁵ Further, as I shall argue below, it picks up this concept of the “infusion of internal and eternal” and draws it out in a new way through an emphasis on the fusion of the exterior and the interior parts of the sacrament. But that new emphasis to come relies on the distinctive threefold conception embedded in Hugh’s earlier description of the Eucharist.

The elaboration of a third term, *res et sacramentum*, alongside *res tantum* and *sacramentum tantum*, took final definition in the *Summa Sententiarum*⁴⁶ of the mid 12th century and was later promulgated in Pope Innocent III’s letter of 1202, *Cum Marthae Circa*:

We must, however, distinguish accurately between three things which are different in this sacrament, namely, the visible form, the truth of the body, and the spiritual power (*virtutem*). The form is of the bread and wine; the truth, of the flesh and blood; the power, of unity and of charity. The first is the “sacrament and not reality” (*sacramentum et non res*). The second is “the sacrament and reality” (*sacramentum et res*). The third is “the reality and not the sacrament” (*res et non sacramentum*). But the first is the sacrament of a twofold reality. The second, however, is a sacrament of one and the reality (is) of the other. But the third is the reality of a twofold sacrament.⁴⁷

signum invenitur secundi; in secundo autem causa tertii; tertio vero virtus secundi, et veritas primi: et haec tria in uno sunt, et unum sacramentum.”

⁴⁵ *Speculum*, 365C: Primum est secundi signum; secundum, causa tertii; tertium, virtus secundi et veritas primi. Aliud ergo est species quae visibilis cernitur; aliud veritas corporis et sanguinis quae invisibiliter creditur; aliud spiritalis gratia, quae cum corpore et sanguine invisibiliter et spiritaliter percipitur.”

⁴⁶ Found among the works of Hugh in PL 176:41-174. On the threefold description of the sacrament, see col. 140Aff.

⁴⁷ Henry Denzinger, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma* (trans. Roy Deferrari; St. Louis: Herder, 1957), 163.

By the time of this magisterial endorsement, Peter Lombard's *Sentences* had already insisted, following Hugh's sacramental realism, that sacraments sanctify as well as signify; they both "bear the image" of grace and are "its cause."⁴⁸ That is, they somehow contain what they signify rather than simply representing something purely external. There is no particular indication in the *Speculum* that the author was familiar with the *Summa Sententiarum*; however, as I have shown above, it is probable that the author knew Hugh's emerging theology of *res et sacramentum* (and others have argued for his familiarity with the work of the *Sentences*⁴⁹). In broader context, though, it is important to note that the emerging language of *res et sacramentum* in the 12th century and beyond gave to the Western tradition an interpretive lens through which the classic terms — prone to what we might call a "non-mysterious" exegetical explanation — became more capable of non-reductive symbolism: "This eliminated the sharp opposition which had hitherto prevailed between the symbol and the reality, the *signum* and the *res*."⁵⁰

John Chydenius calls Hugh's thought, which prevailed among the scholastic theology of later centuries, a "Universal Symbolism" combining Augustinian and Dionysian traditions.⁵¹ While the terminology of *signum* and *res* remained embedded in the Latin term *sacramentum*, the development of a more nuanced way of speaking, influenced in part by the Berengar controversy, in part by the Pseudo-Dionysius, re-

⁴⁸ Peter Lombard, *Sentences Book IV*, trans. Giulio Silano (PIMS, 2010), d. 1, c. 4, a. 2.

⁴⁹ See Evans, *Interpretation*, 482.

⁵⁰ John Chydenius, *Love and the Medieval Tradition*, quoted in Mosey, 203.

⁵¹ John Chydenius, *The Theory of Medieval Symbolism (Societas Scientiarum Fennica Commentationes Humanarum Litterrarum XXVII.2, 1960)*, 38-39.

opened, in a sense, Latin experience to the Greek tradition of symbolism well-captured by Alexander Schmemmann's reading of Maximus the Confessor:

The symbol — and this is very important — is thus the very reality of that which it symbolizes. By representing, or signifying, that reality it makes it present, truly represents it. Nowhere is this symbolic realism more evident than in the application by Maximus of the term “symbol” to the Body and Blood of Christ offered in the Eucharist, an application which, in the context of today's opposition between the symbolic and the real, would be plain heresy.⁵²

Schmemmann assumes that “symbol” in the 20th century and beyond means for many people just what “sign” may have meant in an earlier age: a pointer whose meaning is exhausted in the pointing. Surely this is, as an observation of popular culture, astute. But I suggest that, in the end, the constant attempts to make sharp distinctions between “signs” and “symbols” rarely carry much historical weight, because, with the possible exception of dogmatic decrees, the medieval authors simply do not use the terms with the kind of clarity of meaning that we perhaps wish they did. Language, if it is to be intelligible at all, relies on convention, and surely it is the case that the diction surrounding signs and symbols is always inseparable from both catholic and local traditional usage, impossible to pin down.

III. The felicitous conjunction

The “speculative” sign

These observations have in part amounted to a negative *caveat* based on historical complexities. Now I offer a positive argument as to how the *Speculum* responds to these complexities in its own distinct way. Put simply, the *Speculum*'s extended meditation on

⁵² Alexander Schmemmann, *Liturgy and Tradition: Theological Reflections of Alexander Schmemmann*, ed. Thomas Fisch (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1990), 123.

exterior and visible signs — and not merely sacraments in their strictest proto-scholastic sense — relies on the assumption that *all* the visible signs of the Church's life both communicate and participate in an invisible truth and virtue. On the one hand, this view sees a greater intrinsic power to signs than the Augustinian tradition normally acknowledges, for the *Speculum*'s allegorical associations presume far more than what is warranted by either external similitude or conventional utility. On the other, it never relies directly on the kind of mystical, hierarchial participation seen in the Dionysian tradition, and the universal participatory character of signs is not necessarily efficacious in the way that the sacraments are necessarily efficacious. Instead, the *Speculum* sees in the act of liturgical exegesis a participation in realities beyond those present in mere external signification.

So, rather than either the historical-social power of a word to make a meaning or the ontological-hierarchical power of a *res* to participate in a *res* beyond itself, the “speculative” view fuses the subjective meditation on signs with the objective reality of what they signify. Signs find their ontological weight through human participation; they *are* what they signify in this view not due to the hierarchical constitution of being (although such is not explicitly denied) but due to their incorporation into the human mind, by whose memory they become what they are through use. And while this claim may seem a roundabout way of affirming the Augustinian *res-signum* dichotomy, in truth it asserts a stronger and more substantial role for human memory. Signs take on participatory value not merely because “thinking makes it so,”⁵³ as if they take on a momentary, purely temporal quality through the mental act; on the contrary, it is the

⁵³ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act II, Scene 2.

activity of the human mind's contemplation that raises signs beyond their mere "significance" into the realm of participatory symbol. The alternative to the Dionysian/Augustinian way of posing the question is found in the power of the sacramental economy. For if, in the sacraments, external sign can become fused with internal virtue through grace, there is in principle no reason that other signs cannot likewise begin to participate — albeit in less universal (i.e. bound by canonical terms of validity) ways — in the transformation of sign into symbol, the transformation of a mental association into a gracious, participatory conjunction of materiality and spirit, of time and eternity.

With all this in mind, let me return to the passage quoted at the beginning of this chapter on the combination of external and internal and the value of having *both* the sacrament and the meaning, both the visible sign and the spiritual power.⁵⁴ By now it will have become more clear why I find the language of *res et sacramentum*, developed and used elsewhere, so fitting as a conceptual relative of the *Speculum*'s theology of the sign. Speaking, perhaps, to exactly the kind of spiritualizing reader I theorized above (who wishes to abandon the sign for the sake of its meaning), the author clarifies two major principles: (1) the virtues or "meaning" of sacraments (i.e. the *significata*) can and do operate on their own without mediating signs, as in the example of a self-sacrificing person embodying the virtue of sacramental priesthood; (2) at the same time, the *sacramental* embodying of such virtues is *better*. This is a striking claim that goes beyond an assertion of the sacramental economy's necessity on temporal-historical

⁵⁴ See n. 3 above.

grounds — that we need sacraments now, but there will be a time “when sacraments shall cease.”⁵⁵

For the *Speculum* author, the sacramental, signifying economy is something truly *majus*. The example given, of the Virgin Mary’s childbearing — both corporeal and spiritual — suggests that the joining of *signum* and *signatum* is “greater” because the joining produces a meritorious felicity (*incomparabiliter felix meruit existere*). The internal virtue is, he insists, good on its own. It does not *need* the external sign. But the virtue rejoices, so to speak, from being so joined; merit and happiness well up and overflow in gracious non-necessity.⁵⁶ The author seems to understand how unusual this claim is, for he immediately imagines an interlocutor:

At this point, in case anyone says that charity alone is the sole reward: indeed it is so if we mean that charity alone does not exclude others but removes the comparison of others — or that there is no reward without it or not according to it (which is so great that it never passes away) (1 Cor. 13) — or that charity is lacking neither here nor in the life to come, but alone remains a virtue in perpetuity. Therefore, according to what was said above, it is probably possible to say that God rewards many goods in the saints besides charity — not, as it were, *without* charity, but many which *are not* charity. For instance, surely we would not say that faith “has no merit.” Far be it! All the same, faith is not itself charity; indeed, it can exist without it, but it cannot be given without it: on the contrary, faith increases merit simultaneously with charity. So, therefore, God rewards his other gifts to those who keep themselves in charity, from whom God himself works all things to the good (Rom. 8), and, for each of his gifts, whether virtues or sacraments, which are guarded through charity, he hands over a singular crown, still by grace alone.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ As in the final stanza of W.H. Turton’s hymn, “Thou, who at thy first Eucharist didst pray,” printed as 315 in *The Hymnal 1982*, among others.

⁵⁶ 356B: “...quia pro donis externis collatis charitas intus magis flammescit et meritum crescit.”

⁵⁷ 356B-C: “Hic si quis dicat quod sola charitas est solum remunerabile, verum quidem est si ita intelligat quod sola non excludat alia, sed aliorum comparationem tollat, vel nullam sine ea et nisi propter eam remunerandam esse, quae tanta est quod nunquam excidit (I Cor. XIII), hoc, est nec hic nec in futura vita deest, sed sola virtutum manet in perpetuum. Ergo secundum supradicta probabiliter dici potest quod multa bona in sanctis Deus remunerat praeter charitatem, non quasi sine charitate, sed multa quae non sunt illa charitas. Nunquid enim nos dicemus quod fides non habeat meritum? absit! et tamen ipsa non est charitas; sine ea enim esse potest, sed sine ea non remuneratur: simul autem cum ea auget meritum. Sic

Is it not the case, he asks, that charity is the one virtue that will remain beyond this life? Is it not also the case that charity is the root of all true virtue, and the only real reward for merit? Weaving a scriptural thread into the sacramental-moral framework, the *Speculum* argues that God's good gifts may be summed up in charity but are not exhausted by charity; charity is supreme, but it is not alone. Indeed, charity is not *lonely*.⁵⁸ Charity is enriched, and its own merit increased, when it is given with other goods, virtues, gifts, or sacraments. One can hear in this discussion echoes of medieval discussions on merit and grace. The *Speculum* clearly assumes in this passage that grace and merit are not opposed to one another, just as the *sacramentum* is not opposed to the *virtus*. But, again, they are not merely non-oppositional; they join together for something greater.

The greater joining is, to use the *Speculum*'s term, felicitous. Such affective language is in fact not too distant from Augustine's sense of delight in metaphor: "Are you learning anything different than when you hear this in plain words, without the help of this comparison? I don't know how it is, but I find it more delightful to contemplate the saints when I see them as the Church's teeth that cut people off from their errors."⁵⁹ Augustine may be hesitant to speak in the bold language of the *Speculum* about the sign's greater good, yet he seems to acknowledge that there is *something* to the joining of sign and signified that is not present otherwise. As Caroline Walker Bynum writes, "You can marvel only at something that is, at least in some sense, there. Marveling responds to the

ergo sua caetera dona remunerat Deus iis qui ea cum charitate conservant, ex quibus ipse omnia cooperatur in bonum (Rom. VIII): et pro singulis suis donis sive virtutibus sive sacramentis quae per charitatem custodiuntur, coronas reddit singulas, sola tamen gratia."

⁵⁸ One detects, perhaps, a note of resonance with Richard of St. Victor's later elaboration on the three persons of the trinity and insufficiency of one person to model the supreme charity. See Richard, *On the Trinity*, III.15 in Coolman and Coulter, *Trinity and Creation*.

⁵⁹ Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1996), 6, 7.

there-ness of the event, to its concreteness and specificity. Amazement is suppressed by the citing of too many cases, the formulation of general laws...”⁶⁰

This, then, is the kind of “sign” that the *Speculum* takes for granted in its exploration of the Church’s mysteries. Moving beyond the complex questions of whether the author reproduces this or that recognizable symbolic system, it seems clear that on its own terms all “signifying” for the *Speculum* partakes in a fruitful joining together of signs and things that is itself meritorious, virtuous, good — in other words, *real*, and not merely the passing fancy of the temporal imagination. The joining, whether sacramental in a direct ecclesiastical sense, or signifying in the way that a small church ornament can “signify” something else, is fruitful because it is more felicitous, more “efficient,” and more gracious than the one without the other. While, on the one hand, the sign without its signified is hollow (“all our doings without charity are nothing worth”⁶¹), on the other hand the sign, being joined with the signified, becomes something more than it otherwise was; it is no longer a hollow sign but, shining with the virtue of what it points to, becomes something greater. This theology of the sign may resonate in certain ways with the mystical “symbolic” mentalities surveyed above, but it is unique in its understanding of why signs or symbols are “mysterious.” They are mysteries because they convey something truly new, which can only be discovered — can only exist — therein. Just as there is a value in sacramentality itself distinct from the particular graces of the sacraments, so there is value in the Christian use of signs; this value is not limited by

⁶⁰ Caroline Walker Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity* (New York: Zone, 2005), 73.

⁶¹ Echoing St. Paul’s imagery in 1 Corinthians 13, Cranmer’s 1549 collect for Quinquagesima is retained for the seventh Sunday after the Epiphany in the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer*.

conventional similitude or historical use; it is limited only by the human mind's ability to see the interconnectedness of things.

The titular sign

If this mysterious conjunction is the meaning of signs in the *Speculum*, what “mystery” is contained and signified in the central title-metaphor, the mirror? The lack of a clear follow-through in the book would warn against making too much of the title. The author writes, in the prologue, that he has called the book the “Mirror of the Church”⁶² because “in it one may examine what several things may mystically represent in the Church.”⁶³ The metaphor of the mirror is never mentioned again in what follows. A somewhat fuller consideration of the title will, however, support my broader claims about the *Speculum*'s symbolic world and its insistence on the transformative aspect of the Church's signifying economy. The title-metaphor can reinforce the kind of mysterious symbolical investigation that is the *Speculum*'s goal, including the conviction that sign and symbol can be, when properly understood, “more” or “greater” than the bare *res* behind them. The mirror's subjective, contemplative connotations further suggest an interpretive hint to the whole, supporting my contention that the *Speculum* depicts signs as having real power precisely through the process of contemplation.

The word *speculum* itself, is, of course, intimately related to the history of theology; speculative theology is “theoretical” theology, following the Greek tradition, and to “speculate” is to behold something, to contemplate it. Thus Greek *theoria* becomes

⁶² It is unclear whether the original title was *Speculum ecclesiae*, or *Speculum de misteriis ecclesiae*; possibly the longer title was given as a description in later manuscripts.

⁶³ *Speculum*, 335A.

in many cases Latin *contemplatio*, and the *speculum* image invokes this whole history of intellectual investigation where the various mirrors (*specula*) of visible things allow one to move further into understanding and contemplation of invisible things.

It is no surprise then that the mirror image appears in countless medieval titles, the use of which has been thoroughly documented in recent scholarship.⁶⁴ Margot Schmidt, in her dictionary article on the term, classifies medieval *specula* as either instructive or exemplary. The Victorine *Speculum Ecclesiae* is classed in the instructive category.⁶⁵ Herbert Grabes has a much more extensive list of medieval *specula*, which he sorts into four categories: (1) encyclopedic, (2) didactic, (3) prognostic, and (4) imaginative. Like Schmidt, he places the Victorine *Speculum* in the first category of works meant to give factual information.⁶⁶ Ritamary Bradley, however, argues that Grabes' book gives too little attention to theological works, several of which use the mirror image in a different way, namely "to teach the whole mystical life, as a growth and an unfolding, and to contrast what one is and what one should be or will become."⁶⁷

Bradley's article considers the work of medieval vernacular mystical writers, in particular, but her description is more apt for the Victorine *Speculum*, in the way that it describes itself, than the categories offered by Schmidt and Grabes. Certainly the

⁶⁴ See especially Margot Schmidt, "Miroir." *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique, doctrine et histoire* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1935-1995) 10.2: 1290-1303 and Herbert Grabes, *The Mutable Glass: Mirror-imagery in titles and texts of the Middle Ages and English Renaissance*, trans. Gordon Collier (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge, 1982). The origin of the metaphor is, for most medieval authors, 1 Corinthians 13:12, though Schmidt and Grabes link this image with earlier uses in Greek philosophy and elsewhere. Surely it is no small testament to the image's prominence that the Medieval Academy of America names its journal *Speculum*.

⁶⁵ Schmidt, 1292.

⁶⁶ Herbert Grabes, *The Mutable Glass: Mirror-imagery in titles and texts of the Middle Ages and English Renaissance*, trans. Gordon Collier (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1982).

⁶⁷ Ritamary Bradley, "The Speculum Image in Medieval Mystical Writers" in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Papers Read at Dartington Hall, July 1984*, ed. Marion Glasscoe (Cambridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1984), 15.

Speculum is far from the last three of Grabes' categories: it does not offer practical moral instruction; it does not prognosticate about the future; it does not present an imaginative fantasy world. But I am doubtful that its author sees it as an "informative" work. It is both more intellectually demanding than a work of mere explanatory information, and more mystically inclined than a work of didactic exemplarism. It does not present itself, like some of Bradley's examples, as a work of practical mysticism, but it relies, as I have shown, on a whole range of "mystical" and "mysterious" sensibilities. Its goal, again, is not to explain what the Church's mysteries *mean* but rather to "explain their mystical sweetness."⁶⁸

According to Bradley, the medieval "mirror" writers received from the patristic and philosophical tradition a notion of the mirror that suggested "not so much a contrast between the visible and the invisible, but an emphasis rather on moving into spiritual maturity."⁶⁹ This key distinction fits well with my contention that the *Speculum* is less concerned with a simple unveiling of the invisible than it is with the delectable lingering over the Church's life of signs. Such a lingering is indeed investigatory and intellectual, but its investigation is focused on understanding signs as signs and taking delight in the sacramental economy of the Church, in the beautiful non-necessity of the way that signs can bring us into contact with other things, the way that a step to the altar can be, in a very real (and not merely mental) sense, a step to the heavenly Jerusalem. As a "mirror," then, it certainly informs and explains, but, more importantly, it guides the reader on a mystical quest into the enigmatic character of ecclesial reality.

⁶⁸ *Speculum*, 335A.

⁶⁹ Bradley, 14.

When Paul uses the mirror image in 1 Corinthians, he does so in the immediate context of a comment on maturity: “When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face” (1 Cor. 13:11-12a). We can reasonably suggest then that, for the *Speculum* author, the mirror image is meant to be an invitation to this Pauline process of maturity. The Church’s signs will be the engine for that movement, and the investigation and embrace of these signs constitutes “giving up childish ways.”

“Childish ways,” for the *Speculum*’s purposes, include either (1) ignoring the *res* that the signs signify, or (2) abandoning the *signum* for the sake of the *res*. Maturity means less the ejection of the old than a gracious infusion of the old with the new. The “newer rite” that Thomas speaks of in the *Tantum ergo*, unlike the types and shadows, is not simply the real presence of Jesus in the sacrament, but the real power that the Incarnation gives to temporal things, the potential that common physical items and relationships can be *used* to unfold the mystery of redemption. It is in light of this maturation and growth, fueled by the “sweetness” of signs, that I turn to the work’s context in and contribution to the Victorine school of reformation.

CHAPTER 2 ATTENTIVE HOLINESS: VICTORINE RE-FORMATION AND THE *SPECULUM*

Ecclesial signs, for the *Speculum*, present a unique opportunity for savoring the goodness of redemption. In this chapter I pursue a corollary claim about the *Speculum*'s operative theology: understanding its allegorical style requires attention to a Victorine framework of spiritual formation. The *Speculum*'s own internal assumptions suggest, as I have argued, the inherent value and sweetness of signs; the text's Victorine context provides another warrant for this interpretive lens, showing that a reading of the *Speculum* as a work of mere symbolic decoding neglects its Victorine prioritization of holistic spiritual growth.

Between 1108, when William of Champeaux founded the Abbey of St. Victor at an old hermitage on the left bank of the Seine, and the latter part of the 12th century, the Abbey's community of canons regular produced not only remarkable theological masters — most famously Hugh and Richard — but also a distinctive form of life devoted to intellectual and spiritual formation.¹ As an institution for the reform of the Church, the abbey, and its school, modeled a singular mode of life integrating both monastic piety and scholastic learning. At St. Victor, speculative theology was never construed as an activity independent of the liturgical, ethical, and pastoral demands of ecclesial life.²

¹ For a summary of the history of the Abbey and its major figures, see Jean Châtillon, "Chronique de Guillaume de Champeaux à Thomas Gallus: chronique d'histoire littéraire et doctrinale de l'école de Saint-Victor," *Revue du moyen-âge latin* 8 (1952): 139-62, 247-73. On the Abbey's school and its unique place in the 12th century ecclesial landscape, see especially Chapter 9 ("Humanism and Ethics at the School of St. Victor") in C. Stephen Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000).

² On the Abbey as a school of re-formation, see especially Boyd Taylor Coolman, *The Theology of Hugh of St. Victor: An Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). On the Abbey's liturgical life as central to the work of reform, see Margot Fassler, *Gothic Song: Victorine Sequences and Augustinian Reform in Twelfth-Century Paris* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

Indeed, as Bernard McGinn notes, Victorine life was known for its sweeping comprehension of areas that in other school contexts remained distinct:

The Victorine never isolates or divides *philosophia* and *theologia*, *scientia* and *sapientia*. All the forms of human learning serve, directly or indirectly, in a grand architectonic ensemble designed to foster the work of restoring the image of God damaged by sin. This restoration aims at contemplative experience as its true goal, the foretaste of the perfect vision of God in heaven.³

“Restoration,” for the Victorines, is the unifying goal of various ecclesial and personal disciplines. This concept lies under the *Speculum*’s vision of how signs work in the Church.

According to Hugh of St. Victor, all things fall into two works, foundation and restoration: “The work of foundation is that whereby those things which were not came into being. The work of restoration is that whereby those things which had been impaired were made better.”⁴ Hence creation is the “foundation” and redemption, starting with the proto-evangelium in Genesis 3 moving through the age of the Church, is “restoration.” This concept of restoration, which became central to Hugh’s legacy at the abbey of St. Victor, was closely aligned with various movements of “reformation” in the 12th century. All the energies and activities of St. Victor can be framed and described in the light of these “formational” priorities. The study of the arts and sciences, devotional reading and prayer, public prayer and ceremony, preaching, pastoral care, architecture, music — all of these had their place and their value in the process of transforming the human person more and more into restored and elevated humanity made possible by the Incarnation. Restored humanity was for the Victorines, according to Boyd Taylor Cooman’s reading,

³ Bernard McGinn, *The Growth of Mysticism*, 371.

⁴ Hugh, *De sacramentis*, I, Prol., 2.

more than a simple return to what was lost in the Fall (thus his preference for the word “re-formation”): “[Hugh’s] conception of creation contains an assumption (vaguely Irenaean) that the Edenic state was not complete, but rather was divinely intended and mandated to develop further.”⁵

A great deal of scholarly attention in recent decades has gone to the overlapping concepts of formation and restoration in the Victorine context.⁶ In what follows, I wish to highlight three particular aspects of the Victorine tradition of “re-formation” that align most closely with the *Speculum*’s own priorities: historical realism, comprehensive attention to detail, and an emphasis on personal and communal sanctification as a context for knowledge and learning. Finally, I offer a synthetic description of the Victorine approach to liturgy and argue that this approach is precisely what the *Speculum* presents as normative. My burden is to show how these various Victorine elements render the *Speculum* more intelligible as a work of theology, and that, further, a reading that ignores these elements will neglect the text’s own stated goals.

⁵ Coolman, *Theology of Hugh*, 15.

⁶ In addition to Coolman, examples include Carolyn Walker Bynum, “The spirituality of Regular Canons in the Twelfth-Century” in *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 22-58; Steven Chase, *Contemplation and Compassion: The Victorine Tradition* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2003); Fassler, *Gothic Song*; various material in Christopher P. Evans, ed., *Writings on the Spiritual Life* (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 2014); Franklin Harkins, *Reading and the Work of Restoration: History and Scripture in the Theology of Hugh of St. Victor* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2009); Stephen Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2000); Patrice Sicard, *Hugues de Saint-Victor et son école* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1991).

I. Historical Realism

An explanatory reading: The Divine Office

The *Speculum*'s allegorical eye sees a great deal of concrete historical specificity in every liturgical act. The night office happens at night because the Lord's nativity happened in the middle of the night. Prime happens in the morning because in the morning the women rose early to visit the tomb. Terce happens mid-morning, like the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Sext happens at noon when the Savior was crucified; nones mid-afternoon when he died.⁷ These specific times of day are given further allegorical significance in ages of history:

Night time is from Adam to Noah; the morning, between Noah and Abraham; Prime, between Abraham and Moses; Terce, between Moses and David; Sext, between David and the coming of the Lord; Nones, from his first coming to the second... By vespers the Sabbath is understood, that is, the rest of souls after the departure from their bodies and until the day of judgment. By Compline truly we recall the memory of the complete number and the joyful consummation of the saints which shall be completed in the day of great festivity, when the blessed shall gain the kingdom.⁸

It is tempting to read this passage as a 12th century example of many late-modern attempts to "explain" the liturgy to the faithful.⁹ Here, it seems to say, is what this

⁷ *Speculum*, 340D-341A: "Nocte enim media natus est de Virgine, diluculo surrexit, hora prima mulieribus ab angelis annuntiata est resurrectio, hora tertia Spiritus sanctus inflammavit apostolos, hora sexta crucifixus est Dominus, scilicet mundi Redemptor, hora nona emisit spiritum pro salute mundi."

⁸ Ibid., 346B-C: "Item nocturnale tempus est ab Adam usque ad Noe; matutinale, inter Noe et Abraham. Prima inter Abraham et Moysen; tertia, inter Moysen et David; sexta, inter David et adventum Domini; nona, a primo adventu usque ad adventum quando venturus est reddens vicem pro abditis. Per Vesperas autem Sabbatum, id est requies intelligitur animarum post exitum e corporibus usque ad diem iudicii. Per Completorium vero ad memoriam reducimus completum numerum, et consummatum gaudium sanctorum quod complebitur in die magnae festivitatis, quando benedicti regnum percipient."

⁹ It is difficult to encapsulate well the kinds of explanation I mean here, for they often come not in formal writing but in pastoral sermons, in parochial newsletters, or in mid-liturgical interpolations. For some further examples, as well as a longer consideration of the problem, see both Chapter 3 below and the Appendix.

liturgical particular means; here is why it is the way it is. We might even re-imagine this passage in catechetical form:

Question. Why do we sing Prime at dawn?

Answer. Because the holy myrrh-bearers visited the Lord's tomb at dawn.

Question. Why do we sing Terce at mid-morning?

Answer. Because the Holy Spirit came at mid-morning on Pentecost.

These historical connections are how the liturgy is “understood” (*intelligitur*). And, knowing that, they make sense, because they symbolize or signify some other thing. The liturgical signs and symbols are useful therefore in reminding us of these various parts of salvation history. They provide a kind of coincidental mnemonic device for the spiritual edification of the faithful. Further, this use of signs demonstrates the coherence and value of the liturgy as it has been received. The reason that we need the liturgy is that we need to be reminded of these things that we might otherwise forget.

This reading, appealing as it might be, neglects the *Speculum*'s theology of the sign's enduring reality and ontic weightiness; while it explain the liturgy's utility, it also “explains it away,” so to speak, because it provides no real value in the sign past the moment of temporal signification. If there is any “sweetness” to the sign, in this reading, it is in its ongoing usefulness in reminding us of what it signifies; there is nothing particularly sweet about the process of signification itself. Further, the explanatory reading neglects the Victorine understanding of history, which will, when applied to the *Speculum*, lead to a more fruitful and contextually appropriate interpretation.

I have already noted Hugh of St. Victor's sacramental realism in the development of early scholastic theology.¹⁰ What matters for Hugh is not simply the sacramental *res*, but what comes to be called the *res et sacramentum*, the middle term of signification. It is not enough, in other words, to move straight from the signs of bread and wine to the significance of incorporation into the spiritual Body of the Church; this gracious act happens only in and through the "literal" additional signifier of the precious Body and Blood. Arguably this sacramental theology can be characterized as being concerned with the "letter," to use the exegetical terminology. Indeed, Hugh's exegetical theory offers a useful parallel to his interpretation of the sacraments. Just as, in the scriptures, it is improper to move straight to allegory without dealing first with the literal sense of the text, so in all other symbolic contexts (which is to say, all created things), the "letter" demands our attention.

Most famously for Hugh, readers need grounding in history. History is not one of the twenty-one (or twenty-eight) "sciences," broadly conceived and divided;¹¹ it is rather the first of the three "ways of conveying meaning" when reading Sacred Scripture.¹² History precedes allegory and then tropology in order, though Hugh is clear that this threefold sense of scriptural meaning is should not be imposed everywhere without restraint: "To be sure, all things in the divine utterance must not be wrenched to an interpretation such that each of them is held to contain history, allegory, and tropology all

¹⁰ See above Ch. 1, n. 35.

¹¹ Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon*, trans. Jerome Taylor (New York: Columbia, 1991), 3.1.

¹² *Ibid.*, 5.2.

at once.”¹³ All the same, just as a building must be built from the foundation up, so reading must begin with history; one must “diligently commit to memory the truth of the deeds that have been performed,” paying attention to the four main aspects of who, what, when, and where.¹⁴ This basic historical study must be the “grounding” for any allegorical interpretation.¹⁵

Hugh’s emphasis on history is well documented in recent scholarship.¹⁶ Grover Zinn writes, “Given the actual situation of man’s present existence, qualified by the fact of sin and its fruits, it is only through history that man can begin to overcome the temporality, finitude, instability, and death-ward movement of life.”¹⁷ Historical study, as part of the whole Christian life of *lectio*, is about much more than a right understanding of what Scripture “means.” It is an essential ascetical component for the Christian life, for the redemption of human temporality. For Zinn, Hugh’s emphasis on history was particularly notable in the 12th century in comparison with the development of scholastic theology (especially in the work of Peter Abelard and Peter Lombard) as a work of abstract theoretical science.¹⁸ For the new theological science, readings of scripture needed to conform to unchangeable principles; a systematic approach to Christian

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., 6.3

¹⁵ Ibid. “Nor do I think that you will be able to become perfectly sensitive to allegory unless you have first been grounded in history.” Also, in 6.4: “Truly, the judicious student ought to be sure that, before he makes his way through extensive volumes, he is so instructed in the particulars which bear upon his task and upon his profession of the truth faith, that he may safely be able to build onto his structure whatever he afterwards finds.”

¹⁶ See, especially, Grover Zinn, “*Historia fundamentum est*: the role of history in the contemplative life according to Hugh of St. Victor” in *Contemporary Reflections on the Medieval Christian Tradition*, ed. George H. Shriver (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1974), 135-158 and Franklin Harkins, *Reading and the Work of Restoration*.

¹⁷ Zinn, “Historia,” 136.

¹⁸ Ibid., 143-44.

doctrine, like that of the Lombard, was less amenable to the idea of historical contingency.

As Chenu argues, though, scholastic systematization was only one method of avoiding history. There was, in the rise of Dionysian mysticism, the possibility, at least, of another kind of historical escape:

... the cosmic symbolism of pseudo-Dionysius tended to relegate any reference to history to a place of secondary importance; this was no less true of sacred history, including the deeds of Christ which the sacraments represented. Merely implicit in pseudo-Dionysius was that elaboration, so characteristic of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, of the three values of liturgical symbols: their reference to the past, which they commemorated; to the present, which they vivified; and to the future, which they foreshadowed. Augustine, on the other hand, supplied medieval men with materials and methods for a symbolism capable of laying hold upon time — Christian time.¹⁹

On the same page as this passage, Chenu speaks of a Dionysian tendency to objective realism of the Church and its present reality (as opposed to its allegorical significance), which may seem to contradict the accusation of Dionysian spiritual escapism. In fact, it is possible, as Chenu implies, to assert both the objective meaningfulness of created things while at the same time ignoring history as a sequence of events over time. For the Dionysian mystic, *things* are meaningful, but temporal progression is not — partly, perhaps, due to the sheer ontological weight of Dionysian *things*. Because things are *so* meaningful, so participatory in higher realities to which they inevitably lead, there remains no additional meaning to be made through historical movement. Here, once again, we must consider the *Speculum*'s unique position in relation to Dionysian and

¹⁹ Chenu, 127.

Augustinian symbolism. The Victorine view that I have begun to describe offers an alternative in which both history and things have inherent meaningfulness.

For Hugh, again, history is not a theoretical discipline in itself but the “literal” step in reading. It strikes me as unnecessary then to separate an emphasis on the literal absolutely from the mystical objectivism of the Dionysian corpus. Such mysticism is not, to be sure, Hugh’s, but nor can Hugh and the Augustinian tradition he represents be held up as a simple foil to an imagined anti-historical Eastern mysticism, especially if such mysticism is, by definition, grounded in the literal and the objective.

As Chenu rightly points out, Hugh’s historical realism had practical and pastoral value. If, for Hugh, history grounds allegory and restrains it from flights of fancy, it also grounds the reading of scripture in the actual quotidian work of restoration in the Christian life. The Bible is not first of all about spiritual principles or ideals, but about the who, what, when, and where of creation and redemption — the working out of God’s purposes in history. One recalls von Balthasar’s comments in *A Theology of History*:

If the central foundation of Christ’s act of existence as man is seen as a timeless vision (timeless at least in content), then the follower of Christ cannot imitate him at all in this act, and Christ’s position as archetype and prototype really is called into question.²⁰

In a similar way, T.S. Eliot famously sums up the irreducible temporality entailed in Christian existence: “Only through time time is conquered.”²¹ It is precisely because Hugh and his school were concerned with the Christian life — with “conquering time,” so to speak, through the work of restoration — that they were concerned with history. As Zinn observes, “The structure of the yearly cycle of the liturgy is a continual

²⁰ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *A Theology of History* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1994), 48.

²¹ T.S. Eliot, “Burnt Norton,” *Four Quartets*.

recapitulation of the history of the people of God, Hebrews and Gentiles both, moving through the vicissitudes of this life toward their ultimate eschatological destiny.”²² This Victorine emphasis on history does show itself clearly in the liturgical texts and in the *Speculum*’s explication of that liturgy.

Historical habits of the Victorine liturgy

The sequences written by Adam of St. Victor, probably the most well-known liturgical author of the 12th century, as well as a prominent figure in Victorine liturgical history, stand as prime example of the historical consciousness of school’s worship. The sequence repertoire at its height represents, in Margot Fassler’s judgment, a decisive and intentional appropriation of Biblical and historical (including hagiographical) narrative and theology for the sake of personal and communal formation and worship.²³ Third person Biblical texts are converted to first person chants. Historical events are spoken of in the present tense. In sum the *pro nobis* aspect of Christian liturgy is taken to new and increasingly affective heights.

In the Easter sequence, “Sexta passus feria,” the great events of salvation history are not hundreds of years ago but *hodie*, as in Juliet Mousseau’s translation: “Today the strong lion / gives a sign of / power by resurrecting, / by subjugating the prince of iniquity / through the weapons / of justice.”²⁴ Likewise the Pentecost sequence, “Spiritus

²² Zinn, “Historia,” 145. The claim that the liturgy is in some sense “historical” remains heavily disputed, especially in the 20th century and its own liturgical upheavals. That open question, and its relation to the genre of liturgical commentary (and the *Speculum*’s place therein), will be taken up in Chapter 3.

²³ Fassler, *Gothic Song*, 243ff.

²⁴ Adam of St. Victor, *Sequences*, trans. Juliet Mousseau (Leuven: Peeters: 2013), 79: “Leo fortis hodie / dat signum potentiae / resurgendo, / principem nequitiae / per arma justitiae / devincendo.”

Paraclitus,” announces a confident *hodie* for its celebratory remembrance.²⁵ A sequence for the Dedication, “Jerusalem et Sion filiae,” suggests that Christ espouses himself to Mother Church *hodie*.²⁶ In sequence after sequence, events from salvation history are recounted in the present tense and claimed for today (*hodie*) or now (*iam*); saints are called on to be who they were in history for the assembled Church of the moment.²⁷

In this context, the Victorine assembly was, very consciously and directly, reviewing and learning and incorporating the stories of history. The liturgy embodied a quest for concrete historical connection rather than simply an idealized place for spiritual principles unavailable elsewhere.

Rereading: the historical present in the Office

Keeping in mind the Victorine predilection for historical realism, I propose a different reading of our test passage on the offices and their allegorical meaning.²⁸ The visible similitude between the times of offices and certain historical events neither justifies nor explains the offices; rather, this visible similitude, as a sign, provides an actual link between past and present, revealing (and even causing, through the act of reflection) the unity of the people of God in history. Prime is celebrated at dawn not, precisely, because the women went to the tomb at dawn; rather, prime is celebrated at dawn *so that those singing it may likewise go to the tomb at dawn*. If, as I have argued,

²⁵ Adam of St. Victor, *The Liturgical Poetry of Adam of St. Victor, from the text of Gautier* (Digby Wrangham, ed. and trans., London: 1881), 116: “Hodie / cum tertiae / surgit hora, veniae / fit ampla donation; / criminum / est hominum / per actorem luminum / facta relaxation.”

²⁶ Ibid., 156: “Christus enim desponsat hodie / matrem nostrum, norma iustitiae, / quam de lacu traxit miseriae, / ecclesiam.”

²⁷ For example, St. Stephen’s sequence speaks in the historical present: “Seeing the glory of God / he advances toward victory, / he longs for the prize” (Mousseau, 33).

²⁸ n. 8 above.

the Victorine are interested in history because human beings are redeemed in and through time, the *Speculum* models this historical interest by showing how liturgical action is itself historical action. After all, the Hugonian sense of *historia* encompasses not just the first “literal” step in reading (and hence the crucial importance of material things for understanding) but also the *historical* character of Christian life as an ongoing participation in the economy of redemption. The faithful find themselves re-formed and restored not through the encounter with abstract ideas *behind* the signs but through the temporal movement effected by the Church’s very economy of significations. The “meaning” of signs is not simply what they signify, but their ability, through signification, of making the present into the past, and therefore of “restoring” what was lost by means of the unification of the Church’s eternal and historical identities. The *Speculum* focuses so intently on the Church’s signs less because it wants to explain what they mean than because it wants to show *how* they mean, and how they remain of enduring utility in their real meaningfulness, which is to say their role in making salvation real in lived human experience.

It will come as no surprise, then, that the *Speculum* echoes some of the consciously anachronistic usage found in the sequence repertoire. For example, sometimes the Church sings both a double Alleluia and the *Gloria in excelsis*, but sometimes she does not. These conventions do not simply commemorate penitential or joyful periods or history; at these times the Church just “is” joyful or is not, because she “is” what the season recalls.²⁹ Moreover, the *Speculum* shows a remarkable flexibility in the use of “memory,” which includes memory of the future: “By Compline we recall the

²⁹ *Speculum*, 349C.

memory of the complete number and the joyful consummation of the saints which shall be completed in the day of great festivity.”³⁰ This complex of time-relations places the Church’s liturgy in a kind of non-chronological time. It recalls both past and future, but it also enacts them as present. This seems especially clear in the treatment of Lent and Easter, when the sadness of Babylonian captivity and exile are reproduced in a certain kind of liturgical sadness focused on the reading of the Pentateuch³¹ and the silence from alleluias and the *Gloria in excelsis*, marking (no minced words here) the reign of death and “the punishment in which man fell through guilt.”³² Advent, as a kind of hybrid, allows the alleluia, “because the fathers were under the law,” but not the *Gloria*, “because it is a sign of peace and justice, which the law was not able to give.”³³

For the *Speculum*, these historical connections require no particular justification. They are never given with any clear pretense of explaining a puzzling development in historical terms. The Church’s signs simply do signify different moments and patterns in history, whether or not the liturgy makes any specific reference to them, whether or not there is any obvious visible similitude, whether or not these significations can be in any way proven through textual, liturgical, scriptural, or traditional evidence. The *Speculum* takes for granted that, whatever the Church does, she does with an eye to her history.

³⁰ Ibid., 346C.

³¹ Ibid., 347B: “Septuagesima enim tempus captivitatis nostrae designat de qua ad Jerusalem mystice redire debemus, ut per Hebraeos olim de Babylone exeuntes figuratum est.”

³² 348D-349A: “. Item a Septuagesima, usque ad Pascha repraesentat tempus ab Adam usque ad Moysen, in quo mors regnavit. Unde quia tunc culpa contraria justitiae commemoratur, Gloria in excelsis Deo (Luc. II) siletur, quod [Col.0349A] in testimonium pacis auditum est quando *veritas de terra orta est justitia de coelo prospexit* (Psal. LXXXIV). Et quia poena in quam homo cecidit per culpam, ad memoriam per Scripturas reducit, Alleluia cantus laetitiae tacetur.”

³³ 349A: “Ab adventu usque ad Natalem Domini, a Moyse usque ad Christum tempus est in quo peccatum regnavit, non propter ignorantiam ut mors prius, sed propter infirmitatem carnis. In hoc Alleluia canitur, quia patres sub lege fuerunt, sed Gloria in excelsis Deo siletur, quod est signum pacis et justitiae, quam lex dare non potuit.”

These historical *rationes*, if we can call them that, are self-consciously pluralistic. As demonstrated above, each office in the daily rotation exists “because” of multiple things, which is to say the text makes no obvious attempt to make a clear *historical* claim, in the terms of modern disciplinary history, about how and why a ceremony came about. (Its lack of interest in this question is telling, as I will argue in the next chapter.) Its historicizing is entirely on the level of the ecclesial and personal imagination, focused, as we see in Hugh, on the necessity of history — the familiarity with and even memorization of the stories and events — as the foundation for “mystical” interpretations in the direction of tropology or anagogy.

In summary, the *Speculum*’s strong tendency to historical allegory fits naturally within a Victorine/Hugonian emphasis on historical knowledge. If history is the foundation of the kind of learning that leads to holiness, it is fitting that the *Speculum*, as a product of the Abbey’s school of formation, would emphasize the liturgy’s relation with history. Indeed, a reading of the *Speculum* that neglects this formational context will fail to understand its primary purpose, which is to exemplify how meditation on the Church’s economy of signs enables fuller participation in the gracious work of restoration.

II. Comprehensive Attention to Detail

An explanatory reading: the church building

The *Speculum*’s first chapter dwells on the architecture of the church. The author makes no specific reference to a particular church (such as the Abbey church of St. Victor); likely the discussion is meant to suggest a more generic set of observations that

can apply to many church structures. Early on, we find a detailed consideration of the church walls:

This is the firmly built house of the Lord. The chief cornerstone, Christ, was sent. Upon this, though not beyond it, is the foundation of apostles and prophets, as it is written: *His foundation is in the holy mountains* (Psalm 86:1). The walls built above are Jews and gentiles coming to Christ from the four corners of the world. All the stones are polished and squared, that is sanctified — clean as well as secure — which by the most skilled hand are appointed to endure. Among those, some are borne and do not themselves bear weight, as the simple in the Church. Others are borne and bear, as those in the middle. Others only bear and are not borne, except by Christ alone, who is the singular foundation. Indeed, in this building, the more anyone of greater degree elevates, so much the more does the humbler of the building support. One charity joins all in the manner of mortar, so long as the living stones unite with the bond of peace.³⁴

Again let us posit a straightforwardly explanatory approach in this passage. Why is the church built in this way? It is built in this way because each part signifies something: the foundation, the four walls, the shape of the stones, the stones in the middle, the stones at the top, and the mortar that joins them together. These elements all have “meanings.” Understanding these meanings helps us to understand the nature of the *spiritual* church that is represented by the physical structure of the material church. By this reading we can see how visible things are signs of greater, invisible things. The goal of allegorical explication of the Church’s mysteries is the movement from one to the other.

³⁴ *Speculum*, 335B-C: “Haec est domus Domini firmiter aedificata. Angularis fundamentum lapis Christus missus est. Super hoc autem, non praeter hoc, fundamentum est apostolorum et prophetarum, sicut scriptum est: Fundamenta ejus in montibus sanctis. (Psal. LXXXVI). Superaedificati parietes, Judaei sunt et gentiles de quatuor mundi partibus venientes ad Christum. Omnes lapides expoliti sunt et quadrati, id est sancti, mundi atque firmi. Qui per manus summi artificis disponuntur permansuri. Quorum quidam feruntur et non ferunt, ut simpliciores in Ecclesia. Alii feruntur et ferunt, ut medii. Alii tantum ferunt et non feruntur, nisi a solo Christo, qui est singulare fundamentum. In hoc enim aedificio quanto quis differentius excellit, tanto humilior plus aedificii sublevat. Omnes una charitas more caementi conjungit, dum vivi lapides pacis compage ligantur.”

Nothing too small

As with my initial surface reading of the divine office above, this reading appeals both because it finds in the text the kind of explanation we are accustomed to see elsewhere, and because it supports, at least in a superficial way, the general Christian (and Victorine) prioritization of the invisible over the visible — the valorization of the life-giving “spirit” over the deathly “letter.” Yet I want to argue that, just as a simple “explanatory” reading of the *Speculum*’s discussion of the Office neglects its deep resonance with Victorine modes of reformation, so too such a reading here neglects the characteristic way that Victorine culture treats small details. Is it possible, we might ask, to see in the above catalog of allegories something more than a convenient glossary of invisible facts?

The *Liber ordinis* of St. Victor, the abbey’s customary likely compiled by Gilduin,³⁵ suggests a life in which, as Stephen Jaeger points out, “virtually every moment in the daily round is densely circumscribed by rules.”³⁶ But this apparently comprehensive reach of the rules reflects the broader institutional culture of St. Victor, summed up, in another context (learning the arts), by Hugh’s famous dictum: “Learn everything; you will see afterwards that nothing is superfluous. A skimpy knowledge is not a pleasing thing.”³⁷ In the same chapter Hugh also exhorts, “Do not look down upon these least things. The man who looks down on such smallest things slips little by

³⁵ *Liber ordinis Sancti Victoris Parisiensis*, CCCM 61, Ed. Lucas Jocqué and Ludovicus Milis (Turnhout: Brepols, 1984).

³⁶ Jaeger, 248.

³⁷ Hugh, *Didascalicon* 6.3

little.”³⁸ In his chapter on the church building, the *Speculum* author declares, in strikingly similar language, “Observe each thing mystically, for there is nothing idle here.”³⁹ Just as Hugh encourages his students to do the grunt-work of historical exegesis and memorization, the *Speculum* suggests that “nothing is superfluous.” Everything has its place in the slow and disciplined work of re-formation. No thing is too small to be considered, too small to have mystical significance. This relatively small statement belies the easy assumption that only the sacraments, properly so-called, are worth of spiritual exegesis and mental reflection; the author does not distinguish between natural signs, conventional signs, and sacramental signs. Everything is worthy of mystical observation.

Rereading: the visible invisible

“Observe each thing mystically.” The comment comes just after the section quoted earlier on the construction of the church.⁴⁰ The church signifies “the Holy Catholic Church, which is constructed in the heavens from living stones.”⁴¹ The “mystical” sense of the Church building makes use of a common Victorine architectural metaphor. Although Hugh’s primary architectural metaphor concerns the individual soul, here the metaphor is corporate. But, as is so often the case in the *Speculum*, the metaphoric image is complex. The towers are the prelates and preachers of the Church, because of their prominence; at the same time such hierarchs function, in terms of the walls, as those who do more bearing than others. The corporate emphasis of this image, with charity bonding

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ *Speculum*, 335D: “Notate singula mystice; non enim est hic quidquam otiosum.”

⁴⁰ See n. 33 above.

⁴¹ *Speculum*, 335B.

“in the manner of mortar,” suggests what a theologian of our day might call “unity in diversity.”

The apparent plurality of images and their meanings reinforces what I suggested in chapter 1 is the principle assumption of the *Speculum*’s “signification”: the investigation of these ecclesial signs opens to us a range of connections and truths not otherwise available, truths which are “better,” even, because of their complex of symbolism and relation. More importantly, there is a reality to these signs and images beyond their convenience in edification: the Church’s own mysterious identity is actually accomplished — and not simply made known — more fully in the church building than it is without it, even though, reflecting traditional usage, the *Speculum* understands clearly that “Church” denotes a people, not an architectural structure. It is because the Church builds churches that we can understand the way that she herself is constructed and adorned. Thus, by looking at the details of the church structure we do not simply call to mind certain invisible ideas about the Church; we actually look at the Church, because the invisible has become mystically visible.

Even if it is concerned with details, the *Speculum* does not present an exhaustive catalog of such details, especially in comparison with works generally lumped into the same genre, such as its predecessor, Amalar’s *Liber officialis*, or its successor, Durand’s *Rationale*, both of which go into considerably more detail and at much greater length. Yet the kind of details that the *Speculum* considers do suggest a certain particularly Victorine comprehensiveness.

The layout of chapters alone serves as a good illustration. We consider first not just the liturgy of the church’s dedication (chapter 2), but also the church itself and its

ornaments (chapter 1). We then move into the daily offices and the calendar (chapters 2 and 3), investigating both rite (what is said), ritual (what is done), rubrics (how ritual is done, including the calendar), and the assumptions and historical connections behind those. Then we turn to the clerical orders (chapter 5) as well as the vestments proper to those orders (chapter 6). Next we consider the mass (chapter 7, the longest chapter, following a long tradition of medieval mass commentaries), and finally the scriptures (chapter 8) and the central Christian dogma of the Trinity (chapter 9). From one perspective, these present a rather unwieldy combination of topics. Is the book about the liturgy, or is it about theology? Is it about visual arts, or is it about ceremony? Is it about Christian formation, or is it about Christian belief? The *Speculum* gives us no conclusive doctrinal treatise on any one of these things. Rather it implies that all of these things are part of the Church's mystery — that all of them can provide, if we let them, their own “sweetness.”⁴² And this is perhaps the central thesis of the *Speculum*: that all this investigation can produce fruit. The book is not concerned with actually producing it all in one go as something that can simply be handed down like a mystical lollipop; it is concerned with convincing us that the activity is worth the effort, that the kind of sustained attention to detail it suggests can be continued in whatever setting we might next pursue.

In another way of putting it, the Incarnation itself brings together and sanctifies all the details of temporality and created nature. Consider the following passage from the end of the chapter on the church building:

And all the saints, celebrating continually the day of great festivity which the Lord has made, do not cease to praise with nuptial songs the immortal

⁴² Ibid., 335A; cf. Introduction, n. 4 and Ch. 1, n. 62

spouse, beautiful in form before the sons of men, who has elected the Church in his gracious mercy. Concerning this, as he had foreseen from eternity, he said, *I will go unto the mountain of myrrh, and to the hills of Libanus, and my spouse shall speak to me.*⁴³ About which he *rejoiced as a giant to run the way* (Ps. 18:6)⁴⁴, while he had made his exit from the father, he made his return to the Father — gone out all the way to the dead and returned to the seat of God, that all the elect of the world, from the first to the last, might make a single kingdom in the vision of the highest Trinity, in which the one God is glorified through every age.⁴⁵

The exit-return image of the Incarnation emphasizes the comprehensiveness of Christ's coming: all the way to the dead, from the first to the last, in every age. If this is so, every thing that exists, from the first to the last, in every age, "all the way to the dead," has been graced with the presence of the risen Lord, making all things therefore open to mysterious participation in his own hypostatic mystery. Created things can lead us to God, not just as pointers to the next step, or as secret tokens by which we know spiritual realities, but as the unfolding of God's perfect universal kingdom here and now. Nothing is otiose; nothing is meaningless; nothing is inert.

III. Sanctification and the end of learning

An explanatory reading: Clerical vestments

The sixth chapter of the *Speculum* is devoted to clerical vestments. Though the final part of the chapter moves more firmly into speculative theological territory, the

⁴³ Migne cites Sg. 4, but the more accurate reference is probably an antiphon that riffs on Sg. 4:6 and 2:10, used for the Nativity of the Mary and the Assumption.

⁴⁴ The Responsory verse for Christmas and Epiphany.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 338C-D: "Omnesque sancti diem magnae festivitatis quam fecit Dominus continue celebrantes, in epithalamiis laudare non cessant Sponsum immortalem, speciosum forma prae filiis hominum, qui Ecclesiam sibi gratuita elegit clementia. De qua, ut ab aeterno praeviderat, ait: Ibo ad montem myrrhae et ad colles Libani, et loquar sponsae meae (Cant. IV). Pro qua exsultavit ut gigas ad currendam viam (Psal. XVIII): dum factus est egressus ejus a patre, regressus ejus ad Patrem: excursus usque ad inferos, recursus ad sedem Dei, ut omnes electos a principio usque ad finem mundi unum regnum in visione summae Trinitatis faciat, in qua gloriatur unus per cuncta saecula Deus."

main bulk consists of one list after another of what the different orders wear in the liturgy.⁴⁶ The writing comes across as wordy at times due to the need to explain different terms.⁴⁷ In the following passage, the author describes the main vestments worn by a priest at mass:

The length of the stole notes perseverance — the same as the tunic (alb), because it too is ankle-length. This is for souls to be held, at length, in patience, which pertains to fortitude. But what the stole signifies when it is gathered with the girdle suggests that virtues are united with virtues. Above these is put on the chasuble (*casula*) which is called by another name the *planeta* or the *infula*.⁴⁸ This expresses charity, which is put on in place of prudence, because the fullness of the law is love (*dilectio*). The maniple, which is put on the left side before the outer covering in sight of the eyes, signifies the vigilance through which acedia (which always happens upon minds, and afterwards insinuates itself above the virtues) must always be removed and expelled by the rational eyes or the soul.⁴⁹

Once again it is easy to read this passage as an explanatory guide to individual signs.

What does the stole mean? It means perseverance, because it is long. What does the girdle mean? That the virtues must be tied together. What does the chasuble mean? That love is the fullness of the law. This kind of explanations can be found today in parish leaflets, church websites, and catechetical programs for children.⁵⁰ They also fit neatly with the traditional vesting prayers that tie each item with scriptural and traditional

⁴⁶ On the final part of the chapter, see above, Ch. 1, n. 1 and 3.

⁴⁷ The author seems more aware of variety in clerical vestments from place to place than he is of variety in, for example, the basic structure of a church, or the seven orders of ministry. For a helpful overview of terminological variety here (as well as illustrations), see Herbert Norris's reprinted work from 1950, *Church Vestments: Their Origin and Development* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2017).

⁴⁸ *Planeta* refers to folded chasubles.

⁴⁹ *Speculum*, 353A-B: "Longitudo stolae notat perseverantiam, idem quod tunica, in hoc quod ipsa talaris est, hoc est in patientia tandem animas possideri, quod ad fortitudinem pertinet. Quod stola autem cum zona colligitur, innuit quod virtutes virtutibus adunantur. His supradictis casula apponitur; quae alio nomine planeta vel infula dicitur. Haec charitatem exprimit, quae loco prudentiae ponitur, quia plenitudo legis est dilectio. Manipula quae in sinistra ponitur ante tergum oculos, significat vigilantiam per quam acedia (quae saepe mentibus accidit, et post supradictas virtutes subrepat saepe removenda est et abstergenda ab oculis rationis sive animae."

⁵⁰ See my Appendix below for some examples of this material.

imagery — the stole of immortality, the maniple of tears, the girdle of chastity, the yoke of the Lord.

In such a reading, then, explaining the symbolic tradition of each vestment justifies, in some sense, its enduring use. The vestments are not arbitrary but meaningful. They carry with them a whole range of historical associations that serve to edify both clergy and laity alike. They are, as everything else in the church, visible signs of invisible things.

Learning to be holy

As with the two previous example passages above, the surface “explanatory” reading misses key elements of what the *Speculum* intends to do. While, on the whole, these chapters on the clergy and their vestments seem contain the usual allegorical interpretations of signs, they likewise contain more than the usual exhortatory commentary on what these signs should mean in practice. The priest’s hands are anointed with oil, which signifies “that they have been consecrated by the Holy Spirit to virtue, and that their hands must be stretching out in generosity and not curved back and dry in restraint.”⁵¹ The prelates of the Church, who are “the repositories and the dispensers of the secrets of God,” must actively live the virtues signified by their office and vesture. They are not meant to be like Israel of old, mere “beasts of burden” who “carry bread for

⁵¹ *Speculum*, 355A.

the use of others;”⁵² rather they should understand and embody the sacraments they hold, lest God punish them in the day of wrath.⁵³

The Victorine attention to detail (including especially literal, historical details) serves, it turns out, a deeper focus of Victorine life:

For the educated it is the pursuit of virtues, but for beginners, at the moment, it is the practice of study which is their objective — both pursuits to be conducted in such a way, however, that beginners may not pass up virtue, nor educated persons omit study, either.⁵⁴

Hugh has no problem with the idea of getting first things first: it is not really possible to learn how to be virtuous unless you first learn how to speak and read and think. But it is also possible to put the cart before the horse. Study without virtue is meaningless, but virtue without study is, he suggests, not exactly meaningless, but lacking — probably in the way that a secure building (to return to the architectural metaphor) will not *remain* secure without vigilance over its foundation and walls. In any case, it seems that Hugh, at least, is more worried about the one vice than the other; the temptation to study without virtue is, perhaps especially in the 12th century Parisian environment, especially strong:

There are those who wish to read everything. Don’t vie with them. Leave well enough alone. It is nothing to you whether you read all the books there are or not. The number of books is infinite; don’t pursue infinity! Where no end is in sight, there can be no rest. Where there is no rest, there is no peace. Where there is no peace, God cannot dwell.⁵⁵

Peace, holiness, spiritual formation, salvation: all of these point to the end of Victorine work and study, which is not knowing everything but knowing God, which is

⁵² Ibid., 355B. This unusual image for the Jews is used in Ivo of Chartres’ first sermon, quoted in Margot Fassler, *The Virgin of Chartres: Making History Through Liturgy and the Arts* (New Haven: Yale, 2010), 137. It is also repeated — quite possibly with the *Speculum* as source — in Durand’s *Rationale*, Prologue, 3.

⁵³ Ibid., 355B

⁵⁴ Hugh, *Didascalicon*, 5.8

⁵⁵ Ibid., 5.7.

not possible for the intellect alone but requires the whole person. Re-formation is the broader context and meaning of education, not the other way around. Hugh's teaching emphasizes, in Franklin Harkins' estimation, the notion that lapsarian existence entails a fall from knowledge and not just a corruption of the will; in other words, Hugh is more inclined than some of his contemporaries to include rational, intellectual pursuits under the category of concupiscence.⁵⁶ The intellect, as well as the will, needs to be repaired and "improved" as well. For Hugh, then, the work of study is consummated not in perfect reading, but in perfect living. In Harkins' description, the final step of the *disciplina legendi* becomes the *disciplina vivendi* — tropology is more a matter of practical living than of intellectual interpretation.⁵⁷

The *Speculum* offers some pointed corrections to "dialecticians" and "sophists" who look for argument in the wrong place, such as the Eucharist: "You sprinkle powder into the sky. Your dialectics alone do not ascend."⁵⁸ What is clear in this passage on the Eucharist is that dialectics and rational questioning have their place (and a high place at that, beyond the senses and the imagination), but that place is under faith, the last "place of ascending," which provides knowledge "to which the human reason does not supply experience."⁵⁹ The *Speculum* assumes a hierarchical order of investigation in which all aspects of human knowledge have their proper place. Different human faculties work together relationally to approach the mystery of God. Echoing Augustine in his final book

⁵⁶ Harkins, *Reading and the Work of Restoration*, 108.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 276.

⁵⁸ *Speculum*, 362A: "Hoc est pulverem in astra spargere. Dialectica tua tantum non ascendit."

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 362B: "Respice enim et vide ubi es, et intellige quod sensus primam tenet regionem ascendendi, imaginatio secundam, ratio tertiam, in qua dialectica tua didicit ludere. Supra hanc fides est excelsior dialectica, quae non est audita in Chanaan nec visa est in Theman, cui humana ratio non praebebat experimentum, maxime cum de fide Trinitatis, vel de corpore Domini ut hic sermo contextitur."

On the Trinity, the *Speculum* closes with the reminder that we can discover the image of God through actively remembering, understanding, and loving; yet the image is found “more in loving than in disputing.”⁶⁰ I would interpret this as less a criticism of “disputing” in itself (which is indeed, as shown above, a proper mode of human knowledge) than it is a caution against unbounded dispute as a pursuit for its own sake.

This emphasis on the love of God and virtuous living suffuses the *Speculum*’s approach to reading the Church’s mysteries. At Vespers, for example, the *Magnificat* is sung not primarily for a “signification,” but for the “stirring up of souls” to the example of the Mother of God, in which “we are reformed” (*reformamur*).⁶¹ The canticle further brings to mind the Incarnation, “so that our faith might be excited in devotion.”⁶² At Compline the canons sing the verse “Turn us, O God of our salvation,” so that God “might more fully turn us from error.”⁶³ The general confession of sin is said, “lest we settle for rest in our times rather than *until we find a place for the Lord*.”⁶⁴ These interpretations of liturgical texts and actions explain their meaning, of course, but they emphasize practical consequence in the life of corporate and personal holiness over allegorical relation. Knowing what something “signifies” is not the end of the story; the

⁶⁰ Ibid., 380D: “Qui autem reminiscitur per memoriam, intuetur per intelligentiam, amplectitur per dilectionem, hic reperit imaginem, et illum cujus est imago. Verius enim invenit amans quam disputans.”

⁶¹ 345A: “Sequitur Hymnus, ut demus exemplum proximis, deinde dicto Versu ad excitandos animos Hymnus beatae Dei Genitricis cum Antiphona canitur, in quo exemplo humilitatis ejus reformamur, et Filii Dei incarnatio, per quam deposuit potentes de sede, et exaltavit humiles (Luc. I), ad memoriam reducitur, ut fidei nostrae excitetur devotio.”

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ 345B: “In hac ultima Hora dicitur: Converte nos, Deus salutaris noster, ad hoc insinuandum quod, post omnem perfectionem quae hic haberi potest ubi saepe erramus, orandum est ut amplius convertat nos Deus ab errore.”

⁶⁴ 345C, quoting Ps. 131:5: “Postea Dominica Oratione et Symbolo munimus nos propter nocturnos timores; et alterna confessione mundamur, juxta illud: Confitemini alterutrum peccata vestra (Jac. V). Et excitamur, ne demus requiem temporibus nostris, donec inveniamus locum Domino (Psal. CXXXI).”

purpose of all this symbolic reflection and investigation is, ultimately, the sanctification of lives and the reformation of the whole Church.

Caroline Walker Bynum has argued that one of the key differences between canonical and monastic (particularly Cistercian) cultures was the canonical emphasis on “teaching by word and example.”⁶⁵ In this conception (hardly intended to be absolute), monks are primarily learners while canons are primarily teachers; in reading, the monks look for *inner* examples, affecting the personal heart and will, while canons look for *outer* examples giving patterns for life.⁶⁶ This observed difference offers a useful point of entry into the *Speculum*’s understanding of its own goal. While a more “monastic” sacramental-liturgical commentary might see itself more as a tool for personal learning and devotional enrichment, the more “canonical” commentary, represented by the *Speculum*, sees itself more as a tool for a certain exemplary mode of life. The goal is less to learn what symbols mean than it is to show how the Church’s mysterious signification leads to the holiness that can build up and re-form the whole Body.⁶⁷

Much of the Church’s prayer, for the *Speculum*, is in some sense “for others.” The holy fathers chose eight hours to praise God “before others;”⁶⁸ indeed the goal of such prayer, by which man “busies himself with pleasing God throughout the natural day,” is not that God somehow needs such prayer, but so that God’s works will be “shown before others.”⁶⁹ The joining of four psalms with the one *Gloria Patri*, praising the Trinity,

⁶⁵ Caroline Walker Bynum, *Docere verbo et exemplo: An Aspect of Twelfth-Century Spirituality*, Harvard Theological Studies XXXI (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979).

⁶⁶ Ibid., 191.

⁶⁷ The following chapter continues this theme in its argument against treating the *Speculum* as one in the long line of *expositiones missae*.

⁶⁸ *Speculum*, 340C

⁶⁹ Ibid., 340D.

signifies the unity of the four cardinal virtues in giving an example to others “of the one faith of the Trinity.”⁷⁰ Furthermore, the spiritual meaning of the clerical orders (outlined above⁷¹) principally involves a ministry “to others.”

Learning, for the Victorine canon, is an essential part of the apostolic life. But it is crucial to see this learning less as the accumulation of facts and ideas and more as the necessary ground for living out the Church’s regular vocation, which is to say, both living the life of virtue and exhorting others to the same. The *Speculum* reflects these concerns in its analysis of ecclesial signs. Signs are useful, not primarily because they convey useful information, but because they activate and inculcate — indeed they in-form — the life of holiness that builds up the whole body of Christ.

Rereading: vesting the virtues

As I have tried to show, the explanatory reading of the *Speculum*’s allegorical analyses rarely plumb the depths of its actual intentions. In context of the Victorine emphasis on holiness of life, on teaching by word and example, and on learning for the sake of reformation, passages like the above explication of clerical vestments shine with new light.⁷²

The stole’s association with perseverance is an actual invitation to the same: just as the virtues are gathered up into one in the abstract, so are “virtues united with virtues” when the priest dons the alb, stole, chasuble, and maniple. These items each “express” something that must be present in the priest in order to wear them spiritually. The priest

⁷⁰ Ibid., 341C.

⁷¹ See above, Ch. 1, n. 1ff, also *Speculum*, 355C.

⁷² See n. 48 above.

must persevere in his love and patience for the people of God; he must guard himself from vice; he must infuse the whole of his life with charity; he must soberly remain vigilant and pay attention to the details.

These signs suggest not just a *meaning* but an *action*. Further, it is implicitly sweet and beautiful that they provide a visible sign of this invisible work. As with the sacraments, as with Mary, the “signified” is, indeed, more important — it is better, in other words, to be patient than to wear an outward sign of patience; yet the conjunction of outer sign with inner meaning produces a “meritorious felicity” that somehow exceeds what either can accomplish alone. To know this reality through the sign is to participate in the wonder of the Incarnation’s redemptive grace.

Synthesis: The Victorine approach to liturgy

So far in this chapter I have argued that the most authentic and fruitful reading of the *Speculum* will take into account its Victorine context. Such a reading entails attention to what, in the title of this chapter, I have called “attentive holiness.” The Christian mission of reformation requires a comprehensive and holistic approach to reality, from the smallest historical detail to the weightiest philosophical concept. But this approach must serve the higher goal; knowledge must walk with love if it desires to have fellowship with God. It is this fusion of outer and inner work that drives the *Speculum*’s journey through the Church’s signs. But this quest for a properly Victorine reading demands one further step: a look at the Victorine approach to the particular subject matter of the *Speculum* — broadly speaking, the ritual and liturgical life of the Church.

What is liturgy for the Victorine tradition? We should say at the outset that the term itself is a convenient anachronism. The Latin term *liturgia* (or its derivatives) does not appear in the *Speculum*, nor is it common in other Victorine sources (in fact I know of no examples in Hugh, and in general 12th century usage is rare). The terms actually used are *officium*, and of course *mysterium* and *sacramentum*. This observation of usage argues for a certain caution about modern conceptions of “the liturgy” and what it means or does or is. Already we have noted the ways that Victorine scholarship and piety emphasize the comprehensive scope of Christian life and formation.

It should come as no surprise then that there is no distinct Victorine concept of “liturgy” that stands apart from other aspects of the Christian life. There are, of course, distinct moments, things, and rituals that bear necessary marks of order and the natural openness to explanatory comment: the particular sacraments and their ritual (above all the mass), the rotation of daily prayer, and the particular physical ornamentation surrounding normal Catholic life in the twelfth century, from clerical vestments to church iconography and architecture. If the *Speculum* is a liturgical commentary, we must insist that all these things are “liturgy,” just as they are all, in the *Speculum*’s world, “mysteries” and “signs.” Jean Châtillon has observed that liturgy, for the medieval authors and especially the Victorines, was subject to allegorical interpretation because it occupied a space uniquely shared with Scripture.⁷³ In both cases, a symbolic modality proves necessary, because the act of interpretation is itself central to what it means to be the Church.

⁷³ Jean Châtillon, “Une ecclésiologie médiévale: L’idée de l’Église dans la théologie de l’école de Saint-Victor au XII^e siècle,” *Irénikon* 22 (1949), 126.

Surely part of the difficulty in questions of assigning liturgical meaning, as it has come down to us in the 21st century, is precisely the assumption that there is something particular called “the liturgy” that has meaning. I would argue that for the *Speculum* there is no such thing⁷⁴, and that the *Speculum*’s goal, like that of Victorine life in general, is to show the particular character of Christian re-formation, in this case using the ordinary “signs” that accompany the regular life of Victorine canons from day to day. Rather than telling us what the liturgy means, the *Speculum* presents a Victorine assessment of what the liturgy is. It is the work of restoration at its heart. It is the Church’s very use of signs, the Church’s use of mysteries and sacraments and symbols — in other words, normal human life. It is the various divinely infused engines and energies for personal and social transformation.

In his book on Hugh, Boyd Taylor Coolman comments on Hugh’s usage of the ark-symbol:

Hugh is interested in using this symbol less as a complex sign to point to something else and more as an engine for the soul’s re-formation and re-integration. ... The true significance of the symbol is only secondarily a tool for generating understanding or for “thinking with” in order to understand something better. There is a hermeneutic benefit, but only after the soul has been conformed to the symbolic *forma*. So formed, the soul can indeed interpret reality symbolically (wholistically, synthetically, aesthetically, even sacramentally), but only because the soul has itself first been “symbolized,” re-constructed in conformity with the symbol. Hugh’s overarching concern is not a hermeneutics of a sign but the transformation of the soul.⁷⁵

I submit that what Coolman calls “symbolization” in Hugh is precisely how the *Speculum* views the mysteries of the Church. They are, of course, occasions for rational and

⁷⁴ Apart from, perhaps, an understanding present in the theological world of the 12th century that the Greeks use the term “liturgy” for the mass.

⁷⁵ Coolman, *Theology of Hugh*, 20.

eventually allegorical investigation, but such investigation has an end point in the transformation of the soul rather than the satisfaction of intellectual curiosity. The author's goal is not to understand but to savor; if he desires to know, it is a knowledge for the sake of love.

As a theoretical remark, we might propose in the *Speculum* a kind of “liturgicalization” of reality, a *mysticatio* that seeks to find in all the ordinary material and ritual aspects of canonical life the gracious means for transformation in time. The sustained, thoughtful attention to these details *in time* (which, we might also say, is another definition of Christian liturgy) is itself a means of holiness, both because it inspires the intellect to realities beyond the surface, and because it makes the surface itself vibrant with spiritual light, capable of moving one farther into the center and source of the Church's mystery, Jesus Christ. If the *Speculum* is a liturgical commentary, as I shall now argue, then the whole world is the Church's liturgy.

CHAPTER 3

THE *SPECULUM* AS LITURGICAL COMMENTARY

I. Prolegomena on Liturgy

This is what it means to make the whole world a Eucharist: it means to strive to order every aspect of creation in the light of the transformation in Christ and the consummation in heaven.¹

Samuel Wells' provocative claim in *God's Companions* is that the Church's mission is to make the world a Eucharist. Wells is of course no Victorine, but I suggest that his liturgical vision of Christian ethics relates well to the Victorine emphasis on reformation and teaching. For Wells, the Eucharist does not represent a symbolic book whose meaning needs to be unfolded with allegory; rather, the world is a symbolic book whose meaning needs to be unfolded with reference to the Eucharist.² My argument is that the *Speculum*'s symbolism serves a similar theological vision: the point of mystery-explication is not to uncover a gnostic "meaning" whose reality subverts the sign for those in-the-know; it is to exemplify the mystical activity at the heart of the Church's identity in the world — to teach a method for extracting the sweetness of ecclesial signs.

While this interpretation of the *Speculum* follows, as I have shown, both the text itself and Victorine context, it remains unclear how such an interpretation fits into the broader field of medieval liturgical experience. My task in this chapter then is to situate the *Speculum* within that broader liturgical field, as well as, more specifically, the

¹ Samuel Wells, *God's Companions: Reimagining Christian Ethics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 202.

² As will I hope become clear in the chapter on the Church below, this creational symbolism (as distinct from the symbolism of the "ecclesial mysteries") is not naturally or universally available apart from the sacramental-ecclesial economy. All the same, in and through the Church, the world does indeed become, in some sense, what it always was (if hidden) in creation: a "book" of signs.

liturgical commentary tradition. After some further prefatory remarks on the place of liturgy in Victorine life, I will offer a survey of the liturgical commentary genre and compare that tradition with the *Speculum*. Next I turn to some contemporary scholarly conversations on what liturgy is and is not, especially in the Middle Ages. In response to these investigations, I claim a unique place for the *Speculum* that clarifies some of these ongoing questions in a Victorine way. Finally, in an attempt to synthesize the theoretical claims of these first three chapters, I perform a close reading of one passage from the text.

The liturgy in Victorine life

According to Dominique Poirel, “The ecclesial and sacramental life, which is at the heart of the canonical vocation... appears as the privileged conduit through which the formific beauty of God is communicated to man to restore him in his first beauty and render him even more beautiful.”³ It is thus tempting, based on a general survey of Victorine sources, to suggest that the Church’s liturgy is the practical, unifying element of the Victorine school of transformation. Interesting and fruitful as such a claim may be, what I want to suggest first is that this way of putting things risks neglecting the actual core of Victorine assumptions concerning what we now call “liturgy.” For the school of St. Victor, the Church *is* the liturgy, and the liturgy *is* the Church. We might substitute other terms to clarify the contemporary sense of “liturgy”: worship, ceremony, ritual and rite — but these are particular aspects of liturgy, not the liturgy itself, and not the Church

³ Dominique Poirel, “The Spirituality and Theology of Beauty in Hugh of St. Victor” in *From Knowledge to Beatitude: St. Victor, Twelfth-Century Scholars, and Beyond: Essays in Honor of Grover A. Zinn, Jr.*, edited by E. Ann Matter and Lesley Smith (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), 273.

so constituted. The *Speculum* deals with the mysteries of the Church, not the liturgies of the Church. This literal observation must not be neglected. The *Speculum* is not, then, a “liturgical commentary,” unless we simply substitute one word for another in a way that goes beyond standard 12th century usage. It is a commentary on the Church, fundamentally ecclesiological rather than liturgical. What the *Speculum* calls the “mysteries,” which include but do not equal the category of “liturgy,” are not in the text items in a long list of what the Church possesses; they are active powers and expressions of the Church’s nature as the bride of Christ. We, that is, the Church, “do” the mysteries. We find them; we show them; we unveil them; we are them. The *Speculum* seeks to show how what the Church does is mysterious, which is to say revelatory of some reality beyond but at the same time within. In other words, I take the title mirror image in a literal way: the *Speculum* shows us our own face as the people of God. It shows the Church herself. It is not meant to show what we might be like, or what other things would be like; it is not meant to show the invisible real beyond the visible unreal. It shows what is, and it is precisely this encounter with ordinary reality and its mystical signification that spiritual maturity happens.⁴

In the next section I briefly explore the large tradition of medieval liturgical commentaries. On the one hand, I wish to contest the habitual description of the *Speculum* as a liturgical commentary in the line that tradition.⁵ On the other hand, I find the description useful as an opportunity to question what exactly we mean when we

⁴ As discussed at the end of chapter 1, the mirror, despite its complicated multi-generic usage, often implies this notion of progress.

⁵ Although it may be possible that these also have been misjudged, and that the whole “genre” of liturgical commentary is as inapplicable in general as I propose that it is for the *Speculum*.

declare something “liturgical.” In the final account, we may refer to the *Speculum* as a liturgical commentary so long as we take “liturgical” as roughly synonymous for “ecclesiological.” But, as with the theoretical language concerning signs, some comparative work is in order.

II. The Commentary Tradition

At the heart of this chapter is the obvious question of genre. What kind of book is the *Speculum*? Undoubtedly, it exists in a tradition, not a vacuum, so assertions as to its *sui generis* character must take their place in a wider consideration of that tradition. Mary Schaefer, one of the few direct commentators on the *Speculum* in recent decades, writes that “the document must be understood both as a representative of the tradition and as a contribution in its own right to theological speculation on the liturgy.”⁶

The “tradition” noted by Schaefer is the tradition of devotional and theological commentaries on the mass and office begun in part by Amalar of Metz (d. 850) in his long treatise, *De ecclesiasticis officiis*. Amalar represents the mainstream western medieval tradition of commentary, but he follows a long line of patristic mystagogy, designed primarily to introduce the newly baptized to the sacraments. Douglas Mosey’s 1985 dissertation on allegorical liturgical interpretation from 800-1200 gives a thorough survey of this tradition, summarizing both eastern and western mystagogy and showing the particular lines of continuity as allegorical interpretation developed in the Carolingian era and the high middle ages.⁷ Mosey argues against a certain modern dismissal of

⁶ Mary Schaefer, “Twelfth Century Latin Commentaries on the Mass: Christological and Ecclesiological Dimensions” (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 1983), 317, ProQuest (8316729).

⁷ Douglas Mosey, “Allegorical Liturgical Interpretation in the West from 800 AD to 1200 AD” (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 1985), ProQuest (NL28128).

allegorical interpretation, making a case for its utility, especially in the earlier centuries, for mystagogical communication. Schaefer's dissertation from the same decade focuses more narrowly on the development of medieval views on Eucharistic roles — priest, people, and Christ.⁸ Though she also offers helpful survey material on the commentary tradition, her work is, in my view, burdened by an ideological concern, in light of the 2nd Vatican Council, about a late-medieval elevation of the sacrificial priesthood at the expense of the whole Eucharistic assembly (and Christ himself so embodied).⁹ This is not to suggest that her analysis of these texts (or her liturgical theology) is incorrect, merely that a question of specific theological development, from the viewpoint of late 20th century controversy, is unlikely to show the whole picture of what a text like the *Speculum* intended to do in the 12th century.

Considering the genre as a whole, the number of extant commentaries is quite extensive. Among the most well-known, apart from Amalar, are those of Isidore (*De ecclesiasticis officiis*), Rupert of Deutz (*Liber de divinis officiis*), Honorius of Autun (*Gemma anima* and *Speculum Ecclesiae*), Pope Innocent III (*De missarum mysteriis*), and Simon of Tournai (*Institutiones in sacram paginam*). By far the most prominent later commentator is William Durand (*Rationale divinorum officiorum*). These titles barely touch the surface. Peter Jeffery¹⁰ and Margot Fassler¹¹ have both written brief summary articles on the commentary tradition, while Gary Macy offers a tentative list of

⁸ See also her article on the same themes: "Twelfth Century Latin Commentaries on the Mass: The Relationship of the Priest to Christ and to the People," *Studia Liturgica* 15 (1982-83): 76-86.

⁹ See especially Schaefer, "Twelfth Century Latin Commentaries on the Mass" (PhD diss.), 494-5.

¹⁰ "Expositio missae," *Medieval France: An Encyclopedia*, Ed. William Kibler and Grover Zinn (New York: Garland, 1995), 330

¹¹ "Liturgical commentators," *Medieval France*, 553-4.

commentaries on the mass written between 1060-1225 in an appendix to his article on the same topic.¹² Macy suggests that the works were “extremely popular in their own time,” even if they “remain... unappreciated by modern scholarship” due to their allegorical style.¹³

As a representative of the mainstream Latin medieval tradition, Amalar’s *Liber officiis* suggests a certain practical reasoning behind the whole project of liturgical commentary:

I ... was once moved by a desire to know the purpose behind the order of our Mass, which we celebrate in accordance with established custom. I was struck even more by the diversity of our celebrations — how sometimes one epistle is read, sometimes two, and other such matters that also relate to the other offices.¹⁴

The diversity of early medieval practice, especially before widespread conformity in the Roman Rite, presented a challenge for a pious liturgist like Amalar. This explanation of explanation is important to remember: Amalar’s impulse is not to explain what things mean, as if he finds the liturgy itself cryptic; rather it is to explain differences arising in different ritual contexts. This, he hopes, will shed light on current practice and its meaning. His work, then, is exegetical, but with this key distinction. While in many ways Amalar’s approach is, in a novel way, like the medieval approach to Scripture, in other ways it is entirely different, because Scripture is read for its own sake, as a matter of

¹² Gary Macy, “Commentaries on the Mass During the Early Scholastic Period,” *Medieval Liturgy: A Book of Essays*, ed. Lizette Larson-Miller (New York: Garland, 1997), 25-59.

¹³ Ibid., 25. The works also remain, as Roger Reynolds points out, largely unedited. This is itself a difficulty to comprehension, but such difficulty is compounded by the fact that we have likewise very scant critical assessment of the liturgical texts that they propose to explicate. See Roger Reynolds, “Liturgical Scholarship at the Time of the Investiture Controversy: Past Research and Future Opportunities,” *The Harvard Theological Review* 71.1/2 (Jan-Apr. 1978): 109-124. Good progress has been made since Reynolds wrote in 1978 (see, for example, the various digitized manuscripts mentioned in Fassler, “The Victorines and the Medieval Liturgy”), but the field is too vast to have been covered in 40 years.

¹⁴ Amalar, *On the Liturgy*, trans. Eric Knibbs (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2014), Preface, 19.

interpretive obedience and necessity. The liturgy, for Amalar, is interpreted through historical-allegorical investigation as means of judging between a variety of competing ritual claims. His goal, as stated clearly in the preface to Book I, is “to know what the earliest authors of our offices had in mind, and so what fruit their intentions may bear.”¹⁵

By the time of William Durand of Mende (d. 1296), the concern is less to know “what the earliest authors... had in mind” than it is for the Church to be assured that things have a *rationale* of their own:

A reason cannot always be given for everything that has been handed down to us by our predecessors; and because that which lacks an explanation must be uprooted, I, William, bishop of the holy church of Mende, by the indulgence of God alone, knowing at the door, will continue to knock, until the key of David deigns to open it for me.¹⁶

William insists that what lacks explanation “must be uprooted.” This, for him, is the justification of elaborate allegorical explanation: if there is no such explanation, the inexplicable thing must be abandoned. Notice at once the difference, made perhaps more stark in the passage of four hundred years, between Amalar’s practical-historical interest and William’s systematizing dogmatic interest. This is not to say that the liturgical piety of these two clerics is substantially different, only that the understanding given for their textual task has diverged significantly. William has no need for authorial/ecclesial *intent*, just “explanation” — and though it is doubtful that he would say so, from the preface it seems that virtually any explanation will do.

Does the Victorine *Speculum* find a home in this tradition linking Amalar and William? In some sense, we must answer in the affirmative, for the textual links, if

¹⁵ Ibid., Book I, Preface, 27.

¹⁶ *The Rationale divinatorum officiorum of William Durand of Mende*, trans. Timothy Thibodeau (New York: Columbia UP: 2010), Prologue, 1.

nothing else, firmly establish its continuity with traditional exegesis of ritual. For example, the *Speculum* borrows language and concepts from an earlier writer, Hildebert of Lavardin (d. 1133), and some of its language is in turn used by later commentators, including Simon of Tournai (d. 1201) and William Durandus himself.¹⁷ In another sense, it is obvious that the *Speculum*, in comparison with these other works, “offers less and more” than promised, as Franz notes.¹⁸ It offers less, in that its explanation is far shorter and less thorough than that of Amalar, William, or many other commentators; more, in that its explanation reaches unusual places, such as deeper aspects of sacramental theology, not to mention Trinitarian theology. In this “more and less,” characterized by its sweeping theological scope as well as its verbal pith — compare its 19,000 words to the Amalar’s 105,000 — the *Speculum* stands out as an inherently unusual example in the commentary tradition.

The difference in length may not permit us to make sweeping judgments about the *Speculum*’s distinctive charism; yet, at the very least, it warrants a cautionary pause before the immediate categorization of the work as one more example of the same old thing. While the *Speculum*’s length cannot provide sole warrant for judgment on its genre, a consideration of genre does suggest a reason for the *Speculum*’s length: a work seeking to explicate a certain theological vision, grounded in mystico-liturgical

¹⁷ Three scholarly treatments of the *Speculum*’s textual sources (and progeny) deserve particular note: Schaefer (dissertation); Damien Van den Eynde, “Le *Tractatus de sacramento altaris* faussement attribué à Etienne de Baugé,” *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 19 (1952): 233-35; and Henrich Weisweiler, “Zur Einflussphäre der ‘Vorlesungen’ Hugos von St. Viktor,” *Mélanges Joseph de Ghellinck, SJ* (Gembloux: J. Duculot, 1951), Vol. 2: 527 to 581. Christopher Evans gives further commentary and sources in his introductory essay on the *Speculum* in Victorine Texts in Translation volume, *Interpretation of Scripture: Theory*, 481-482.

¹⁸ “Er bietet sonach weniger und mehr, als er verspricht,” which for Franz refers to the brevity of the whole treatise as well as the final speculation on scripture and the Trinity. A. Franz, *Die Messe im deutschen Mittelalter* (Freiburg: Herder, 1902).

experience, would feel less urgency in explaining exhaustively every detail than a work whose goal is the communication of either mystagogical facts or pietistic secrets. While, in its outward form, the *Speculum* functions very much like any other commentary, in its inner “sweetness” it *uses* the commentary genre, not as something to be *enjoyed* for its own sake, but as the means of attaining something else, a true *res* that is beyond the *res* of individual sacraments — the *res* of the whole system of sacramental signs.

Having taken note of the way that both Amalar and William begin their respective works, the striking opening lines of the *Speculum* take on new significance:

Your Love invited me to treat the ecclesiastical sacraments and explain to you their mystical sweetness... And so the desired book... flowing with interior nectar just as honey of the honeycomb, I hand over to your intelligence.¹⁹

I have purposefully emphasized the notion of “sweetness” (*dulcedo*) in the *Speculum*, because the author specifically describes his book in this way: an explanation of how it is that the ecclesiastical sacraments are mystically sweet. He does not set out to explain the sacraments or the Church’s other mysteries — that would, perhaps, entail a standard tract on the mass or the office, following the patristic-medieval allegorical inheritance. What is at stake then is not meaning, or *rationes*, or significations, but the whole context and meaning of the fact that the Church has sacramental and mysterious signs. As I have argued, there is something intrinsically “sweet” about this economy of signs, something that goes beyond mere exegesis and into the realm of foundational theology. We are dealing neither with ahistorical Dionysian symbolism nor with conventional Augustinian signs and things; signs here have a kind of potency and flexibility capable of

¹⁹ *Speculum*, PL 177:335A. See above, Introduction, n. 4 for the complete prologue.

transforming the soul precisely through their felicitous conjunction of visible and invisible reality.

Despite its prominence in the prologue, the image of “sweetness” is not especially common in the text that follows. To be sure, prayer is a “sweet smell,” like the incense,²⁰ and the gospel book’s cushion “is the charm and sweetness in the commandments of the Lord.”²¹ Further, the sequence sounds sweet because “the melody of the celestial organum will abound with sweet happiness.”²² More tellingly, perhaps, the tropological meaning of things, in comparison to words, is “sweeter” and “more worthy.”²³ The lack of consistent verbal continuity cannot obscure, however, the conceptual coherence of the work’s overall purpose. The “sweetness” of the mysteries is precisely the kind of lingering, intentional grace that I earlier elucidated concerning signs. The mysteries are, in their own right, sweet. What is sweet is not discovering the meaning behind the sacraments, but rather the reception of and encounter with the sacraments along with an understanding of their sacramental *res*. The *Speculum* proposes that the proper form of the Christian life is not the attainment of the discrete and simply defined meanings of signs but rather the reformation of taste so that it can properly receive and appreciate the “sweetness” of things. Things are not sweet if they are only things (that is, if they have no spiritual significance), but nor are they sweet if they are merely spiritual realities.

Hence, according to the Prologue, “Every good thing shared begins to shine more beautifully when it is shared” (*omne bonum communicatum pulchrius elucescit cum*

²⁰ Ibid., 343B: “The thurible is the heart of man, the fire charity, the incense prayer, which gives a sweet smell to God when it burns through the fire of divine love.”

²¹ Ibid., 347A.

²² Ibid., 359C (the translation in this case is from Fassler, *Gothic Song*, 62).

²³ Ibid., 375C

communicatur).²⁴ This assertion resonates with the author's sense that the sacramental *res* are somehow sweeter when received sacramentally. Nowhere is it claimed that the *bonum* is "better," in an intrinsic or transformed way, when shared, only that it shines "more beautifully." This small comment in the prologue encapsulates, I suggest, the *Speculum*'s whole approach to explicating the mysteries. The whole work of allegorical and tropological exegesis takes place within this central conviction that the sacramental-signifying economy of the Church is a communication, or a communion, concerned as much with the modality of its meaning-transference as with its objective content. A good thing is a good thing, and a good thing is a beautiful thing. But in the sharing, the communion, the signification, beauty shines all the more brightly. If we connect this notion further with the Victorine/canonical emphasis on teaching "by example"²⁵, it is clear that the *Speculum* author presents his work in the context of moral, theological, and even pastoral education. What is at stake is less a kind of personal devotional enrichment (to make the experience of the liturgy more "meaningful" for an individual) than the edification — and here the Victorine architectural metaphors should stand at the ready — of the whole Church. What, after all, is the Church, if not the "more beautiful" result of sharing Christ's gospel? Surely Christ's ecclesial body is not better than his historical or sacramental body, his enduring two-natured presence in the created order, any more than his human nature is "more" than his divine nature. But if the Church is the communion of his Body, the place of *communicatio idiomatum*, to use the patristic phrase, the reality of

²⁴ Ibid., 335A. See above, Introduction, n. 4.

²⁵ Discussed in chapter 2 following Caroline Walker Bynum's thesis.

the Incarnation, through the communion of the Church, shines yet more beautifully than its bare facticity can alone.

In sum, this rich theology of signs sits only awkwardly alongside the mainstream commentary tradition — at least as it has normally been read. The text's own stated goals are distinct from those of Amalar and his successors. Treating the *Speculum* as part of the genre, then, entails certain caveats:

First, the *Speculum* is a liturgical commentary insofar as it is a commentary on what we might call the liturgical constitution of the Church. The superficial elements of the text follow those of the commentary tradition, but, even when those elements are considered in similar ways (that is, assigned the same allegorical meaning), the text's purpose in treating them delves more deeply into the space opened up by the 12th century theology of *res et sacramentum*. That is, what is in many commentaries a straightforward two-sided transaction is for the *Speculum* a more nimble meditation on the baseline economy of signs that I refer to as the “sweetness.”

Second, the *Speculum* is a liturgical commentary insofar as its vision of liturgy comprises the whole life of the Church in the world. As I suggested above, “liturgy” as a concept is not clearly present in the *Speculum*, and the commentary clearly includes much more (and less) than that of a mass commentary or *expositio missae*.

Third, the *Speculum* is a liturgical commentary insofar as mystical commentary exemplifies a general “liturgical” approach to the Christian life rather than a particular exegetical approach to narrowly confined texts (i.e. Scripture and the liturgy).

III. Liturgy and history

The motivations of liturgical scholarship

Genre is inevitably a matter of shorthand over substance. So in large part what I have said on the question of genre amounts to an explication of exactly how and why the *Speculum*'s particularities transcend the mold of the shorthand description. But this investigation is more, I submit, than a mere academic curiosity; the question of genre forces us to think more clearly about what a text is for and how it does what it does. While such an exercise can have a frustratingly apophatic character ("it is not *that*"), all such denials prepare the way for an increasingly accurate positive description. I press on, then, beyond the commentary tradition to a subject so far only treated in passing: the question of liturgy itself. While the present essay can hardly turn itself into a *summa liturgica*, a serious attempt to understand the *Speculum* must have some basic grasp on the *visibilia* that the text means to explain. It is essential, in other words, to examine our assumptions about the nature of these various aspects of church life; to do so means in part to consider whether the *Speculum*'s commentary is fundamentally a pious interpretation or a basic description. Is the spiritual allegory employed here an addendum to the liturgy's prior independent existence or rather something touching on its substance?

What, after all, is the liturgy? What does the Church do when she prays, sings, swings thuribles, moves from one part of the sanctuary to another, kisses objects, compiles texts for recitation and promulgation, builds structures, blesses them, and so on?

For this is exactly the question of the *Speculum*, even if its term is “mysteries” rather than “liturgy.” And it is a question that continues to pester theologians, liturgists, liturgical theologians, and historians, because inherent in the question is another question (or an assumption), which is whether or not it is really proper to speak of the liturgy as something discrete that the Church *does*, or whether the liturgy is, in Alexander Schmemmann’s interpretation, something that “happens to us.”²⁶

I pose these questions of the 20th century liturgical movement because most of the scholarship on the medieval liturgy in the last fifty years or so has been written directly in its light (or shadow). This is not meant as a damning value judgment but a statement of crucial context for any presumption of reading the 12th century texts on their own terms. It is naïve, in other words, to imagine that we can approach any question of “liturgy” or its meaning in isolation from centuries of contested definitions and metanarratives, not just following the 2nd Vatican Council, or farther back the Reformation(s), but dating at least into the period of medieval liturgical commentary leading to the *Speculum*.²⁷

For some 20th century commentators, the medieval commentary tradition represents an “arbitrary and naïve medieval liturgical pansymbolism,”²⁸ full of “hypersymbolistic fancies” and lacking a sufficient concern for “reporting the mind of the

²⁶ Alexander Schmemmann, “Symbols and Symbolism in the Byzantine Liturgy: Liturgical Symbols and Their Theological Interpretation,” in *Liturgy and Tradition* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1990), 127.

²⁷ Amalar’s method of treating the liturgy was severely questioned by the Synod of Quiercy in 838, as well as by others during and after his lifetime. For sources on this, see “Amalarius of Metz,” *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. F.L. Cross and E.A. Livingstone (Oxford: Oxford, 1997), 48. On the importance in this criticism in interpreting the medieval liturgy, see especially Cynthia Bourgeault, “The Aesthetic Dimension of the Liturgy: A Theological Perspective for Literary Historians,” *University of Toronto Quarterly* 52.1 (Fall 1982): 9-19.

²⁸ Cipriano Vagaggini, *Theological Dimensions of the Liturgy* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1959), 43.

Church.”²⁹ The true patristic understanding of symbols was simply “lost” by the Carolingian era, according to Schaefer.³⁰ Presumably it remained then for serious 20th century liturgists to recover it with a turn to primitive sources and their true interpretation.

It is no secret that the allegorizing instinct of Amalar and his successors (including, in a limited way, the *Speculum* author) fails to make much of an impression on the average 21st century Christian. It is not apparent to most congregants, for example, that the mass is a dramatic re-enactment of the life of Jesus; hence many of the more common allegorical explanations fall on deaf ears. Anyone in pastoral ministry has experienced the difficulty of answering the question “Why do we do this?” in a way that acknowledges the legitimacy of the question without seeking to undermine the liturgy’s own core mystery. Of course, for the medieval commentators, this was not exactly the question. Amalar and Durand sought not “why we do things” but why they developed the way that they did, and what that development might communicate.

While Durand may have taken a certain episcopal responsibility into his own concern over the liturgy’s rational legitimacy, most commentators of the high middle ages, including our *Speculum* writer, take for granted that the liturgy is what it is. This cultural context, in comparison with the 20th century, is of crucial significance: except in the case of limited reform movements (like that of Cîteaux), commentators did not consider whether the liturgy should be celebrated the way it was celebrated; the liturgy itself was a given. Until relatively recently the approach to these liturgical questions was

²⁹ Ibid., 46.

³⁰ Schaefer, diss., xviii.

more Marian than Zecharian: “How can this be?” as opposed to “How will I know that this is so?”³¹ The task then was to explain *how* it made sense, not *whether* it made sense. This is quite different in tone and aim from a 20th or 21st century attempt to argue for how the liturgy should be or should not be based on theorized primitive apostolic or systematic theological norms.

In terms of wide popular perception, it was the 20th century West that, in Joseph Ratzinger’s terms, lost the “givenness of the liturgy, the fact that one cannot do with it what one will.”³² Ratzinger continues to argue that the impulse to “creativity” that emerged with this tendency to liturgical tinkering comes from a Marxist world view:

Creativity means that in a universe that in itself is meaningless and came into existence through blind evolution, man can creatively fashion a new and better world. Modern theories of art think in terms of a nihilistic kind of creativity. Art is not meant to copy anything. Artistic creativity is under the free mastery of man, without being bound by norms or goals and subject to no questions of meaning.³³

We need not suggest a viciously Marxist orientation of the 20th century detractors to see a certain parallel in thought. Why, after all, is it so horribly dangerous to see the liturgy as somehow, symbolically, imitative of Christian history? For this is in the end the central question for the 20th century interpretations of medieval liturgy and its contemporary observers, clustering in large part around positive or negative reaction to O.B. Hardison’s 1965 study, *Christian Rite and Christian Drama in the Middle Ages*.³⁴

³¹ On this distinction between the two annunciations of Luke 1, I am indebted to a talk by Paul Griffiths at Duke Divinity School Chapel on the feast of the Annunciation in (I believe) 2009.

³² Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, trans. John Saward (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2000), 165-66.

³³ *Ibid.*, 168.

³⁴ O.B. Hardison, Jr., *Christian Rite and Christian Drama in the Middle Ages: Essays in the Origin and Early History of Modern Drama* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1965).

Liturgy and drama

Hardison's intention in 1965 was to address a mainstream historical assessment suggesting that the rise of drama (such as miracle plays) in the middle ages represented the re-emergence of a non-Christian or pagan sensibility which could not find a proper place within the formal institutional and liturgical constraints of the Church. For Hardison, this misrepresents the liturgy, which, he argues, *is* a kind of drama:

From beginning to end, but especially during the canon and communion, the mass is a rememorative drama depicting the life, ministry, crucifixion, and resurrection of Christ. Although other elements vary according to the ingenuity of the interpreter, rememorative allegory is always present.³⁵

Hardison's argument relies, in large part, on the Amalarian tradition of allegorical interpretation, in which the whole liturgy somehow re-presents the life of Christ. In this view, then, the development of non-liturgical, unofficial drama emerged as a natural extension and continuation of what was already happening in the Church. There is thus nothing inherently pagan or sub-Christian about the dramatic impulse.

This willingness to see a dramatic aspect to the liturgy (whether in Amalar or Hardison) is what others call the "historicist" reading of liturgy. It is what Schmemmann so rejects, albeit in an Eastern Orthodox context: "The difficulty lies in a simple and easily verifiable fact: the absence of virtually any reference to such symbols and symbolic meanings in the liturgy itself...".³⁶ Cynthia Bourgeault, closely following Schmemmann's criticism, rejects Hardison's thesis on the grounds that it ignores the integrity of the Eucharistic liturgy as it presents itself.³⁷ For both of these theologians the liturgy needs to

³⁵ Ibid., 44.

³⁶ Schmemmann, 117.

³⁷ See Bourgeault, 16.

be allowed to speak for itself, and nowhere in the rite is there reference to the kind of historical re-enactment proposed by Amalar or Hardison.

These criticisms, however valid they may be, argue perhaps too strongly from a position of exclusivity. They appear to assume that those offering the “historicist” and symbolic interpretation of the liturgy do so in a way that exhausts its intelligibility. It is not clear to me that Hardison (or Amalar et al.) posit the “dramatic” or “historical” character of the liturgy as being the exclusive and complete “meaning” of the liturgy. There is no reason, in other words, that the liturgy cannot also “be,” in a mystical-eschatological sense, the entrance into heaven that Schemann or Bourgeault want it to be. Certainly what I have shown already in the *Speculum* suggests that the allegorical interpretation is as much a way of describing what is actually happening now, on an invisible layer, as much or even more so than it is a way of giving a mimetic explanation of similar historical movements. There are, further, some unacknowledged differences of definition. Hardison at least attempts to address these when he argues that those objecting to the term “drama” in medieval liturgy do so based on 19th century definitions of drama and its necessary parts (especially impersonation).³⁸ That is, today we associate “drama” with “acting,” but for the medieval mind it was possible to re-present a story without technical efforts at impersonation (manipulating the voice, wearing costumes, etc.). The human impulse to dramatic representation, he argues, is far older, and more complex, than these definitions.

Bringing together these various strands of argument — pro-drama, anti-drama, historicist, primitivist — Robert Taft argued convincingly in 1981 that the impulse

³⁸ Hardison, 32.

(particularly strong in that century) for recovering the original primitive tradition “is futile, because it does not exist”:

In short, I think it is demonstrably clear that the meaning of every feast, Sunday included, is a synthesis, the term of a process and not its beginning. When we go back to that beginning, what we find is not some one primitive synthesis, but several strains. To select one as preferable is perfectly legitimate as long as one realizes that personal taste or prejudice does not make a theology, much less a tradition.³⁹

This is an important prescription for patristic theology and liturgy, but no less for the medieval theology and liturgy represented by the *Speculum*. It is essential, in other words, to approach the world of the *Speculum* without the last century’s prejudices about liturgical allegory and dramatic representation.

The fact that a work like the *Speculum* uses historical allegory need not suggest, *pace* its detractors, that the liturgy is just a commemorative drama and nothing else. Nor should we limit our sense of what commemorative drama might be to what we think commemorative drama is in the modern era. True, when the subdeacon and deacon go before the priest, it is not obvious or apparent from rubrics or rite — from “the liturgy itself,” in Schmemmann’s terms — that this is “because the disciples were sent ahead of the Lord.”⁴⁰ The sacred ministers do not impersonate the Lord and his disciples; they do not dress up in 1st century costumes and put on Aramaic accents; they do not fill the church with changing backdrops of Palestine. But this reason for the liturgical action does not negate other definitions of what the action *is*. The *Speculum* author is not interested in what the action *is*, in what it signifies in the ultimate and final historical sense of what

³⁹ Robert Taft, “Historicism Revisited,” in *Liturgical Time: Papers Read at the 1981 Congress of Societas Liturgica*, ed. Wiebe Vos and Geoffrey Wainwright (Rotterdam: Liturgical Ecumenical Center Trust, 1982), 106-107.

⁴⁰ *Speculum*, 357C

“really” happened; he assumes no absolute dichotomy between a simple temporal movement or a spiritual movement in the heavenly places. Indeed, the *Speculum* doctrine of signs, as I have shown, offers a middle place between Augustinian signs and Dionysian symbols, assuming that temporal, historical connections between things are no less real by virtue of having been fused in the human intellect. He is interested in drawing out the mystical sweetness of these liturgical signs, which is to say the way that the various levels of meaning interact with one another to produce something more pleasing and more fruitful for living the beauty of holiness. And, again, he is most certainly not interested in whether or not the particular custom of procession needs to be retained.⁴¹ The liturgy itself, and its intrinsic value, is a given.

The difficulty among 20th century scholars in agreeing on what the liturgy is in the medieval period stems partly from the category confusion I suggested in my prolegomena above: namely, a too-easy assumption about the discrete items included by the term “liturgy.” What some seem to mean is simply the Mass, or the Eucharistic rite and ritual (and, to be fair, in the East this is usually “the liturgy” in shorthand). But, of course, a book like the *Speculum* takes a much broader approach to its mysteries, seeing the Church, her members, her institutional structures and physical ornaments, as well as her ceremonies as all worthy of comment.

Would a Christian in the 12th century even understand the question of whether the liturgy is “drama,” or whether it is fittingly described as a representation of historical

⁴¹ There are interesting parallels between the liturgists and the Biblical scholars of the 20th century scholarly culture. Both seem more interested in proving whether or not a given text is authentic than what it says or how it might be appropriately used. It seems to me that we too easily associate the commentaries of earlier ages with this redactive critical tendency.

events? In Chenu's broad description, the 12th century Christian was a "symbolist" to the very core.⁴² Reality and daily life were all "symbolic" and therefore "dramatic" in some sense. And though our common Christian might understand and acknowledge that a street preacher or dramatic show was not "a sacrament" in the way that the Eucharist is a sacrament, it is doubtful that she would be able to categorize one as liturgical and one as non-liturgical. This lack of distinction comes less from lack of education than it does from true experiential understanding of these various areas as part of a seamless whole. The Mass was the Mass, prayer was prayer, an occasional ritual blessing or consecration (say, of a bridge, or a church) was a particular and distinct thing, but was there anything uniting these in contradistinction from the ceremonies of eating a meal at home? As Catherine Pickstock observes,

This was a time when the Offertory gifts were not disconnected from the produce of everyday life; indeed, the category itself of 'everyday life' was perforce a thoroughly *liturgical* category. For the community was not something which existed prior to, or in separation from, the Eucharist as a *given* which simply met at regular intervals to receive the Sacrament. Rather, the community as such was seen as flowing from eternity through the sacraments.⁴³

The concept of "liturgy" as a formalized ceremonial reality apart from ordinary life assumes that ordinary life is somehow unceremonial, unritual, unliturgical, lacking in

⁴² See Chapter 1, n. 4.

⁴³ Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 170-171. By way of contrast to Pickstock's (somewhat idealized) medieval picture, Charles Taylor describes the "immanent frame" of modernity in which, after a series of "disembeddings," the prevailing social conditions virtually proscribe a traditional understanding of the transcendent. Without suggesting that modern liturgics are entirely "secular" in orientation, I do wonder if much of our concern with "meaning" relies on the kinds of disciplinary separations implicit in the secular age. See especially Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 539ff, as well as, on the various reform movements redefining the Christian life in early modernity, John Bossy, *Christianity in the West: 1400-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

coherent order and pattern. For the 12th century theologian (indeed, ordinary Christian), nothing could be further from the truth.

I must return, then, to the diffident assertion that we cannot say precisely what the liturgy is or means in the 12th century, because it is unclear that there is any such thing. What we can say, however, about the particular rites, ceremonies, and signs that the *Speculum* treats, comes to the following axioms, all of which fill out further the portrait of what kind of book the *Speculum* is and what it intends to do:

- (A) To use the term “liturgy” legitimately vis-à-vis Victorine culture and theology entails a shorthand reference to the Church’s entire mode of being in the world, including not only ritual texts, but also social embodiments, material culture, and other ecclesial habits of mind and body.
- (B) The liturgy is not therefore limited to sacramental rites, but it is inevitably ecclesial. That is, the natural world’s mystical signification is only fully accessible and/or present in and through the Church.
- (C) The liturgy is not primarily something that the Church does, but rather (both descriptively and prescriptively) the way that she does everything she does.

IV. A “Speculative” Synthesis: Liturgy, Ecclesiology, and History

The *Speculum*, as a work on the liturgy, characterizes the 12th century, and especially the Victorine, understanding of the liturgy, the Church, and history. To read it rightly, then, requires avoiding the debates of 20th century liturgical scholarship. It is

tempting to assume that the *Speculum*'s mystical method remains foreign to us because mainstream Christians no longer believe that the liturgy means what the *Speculum* thinks it means; I would suggest rather that it is foreign because mainstream Christians no longer believe in liturgy the way that the *Speculum* believes in liturgy. The ground has shifted.

My insistence that the liturgy is not a particular aspect of the Church's life but a way that the Church lives its life stands alongside a claim that the *Speculum*'s "historicizing" interpretation of this liturgical life represents a particularly Victorine culture. We thus return to the Hugonian emphasis on history, well synthesized by Patrice Sicard:

If the soul lives in the Church as the Church in the soul, they are one common life. And if the Church began with the world, even before having been purchased at Calvary, this common life is also a common history, to which the history of the universe could not be entirely foreign. Whence in the Victorine there is a consciousness of history that is much more than the sense of the past: that of its actual presence.⁴⁴

Sicard says that ecclesiology is at the center of Hugonian theology, with salvation history as an "organizing principle."⁴⁵ If this is so, it makes perfect sense that a Victorine liturgical commentary would employ the kind of "historicizing" allegory already common in the genre, even while turning that hermeneutical approach into an occasion for further theological reflection. It is precisely because history is so central to Victorine thought that we cannot dismiss the *Speculum*'s allegory as the latest in a long line of

⁴⁴ Patrice Sicard, *Hugues de Saint-Victor et son École* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1991), 134. "Si l'âme vit dans l'Eglise comme l'Eglise dans l'âme, elles ont une vie commune. Et si l'Eglise a commencé avec le monde, avant même d'être achetée au Calvaire, cette vie commune est aussi une histoire commune, à laquelle l'histoire de l'univers ne saurait être entièrement étrangère. D'où chez le victorin une conscience de l'histoire qui est bien plus que le sens du passé: celui de sa présence actuelle."

⁴⁵ Ibid., 91.

fanciful explanations having nothing to do with what the liturgy really is and does; for the Victorine, there can be nothing more real or more present than history. Rather than making the liturgy more distant and detached from experience, an “historicized” understanding of the Church’s worship and daily life — where present actions touch a whole range of events, persons, and principles on the historical continuum — actually strengthens the Church’s experience in the present.

What I am suggesting, in effect, is a method for reading the *Speculum* that assumes what I argue its contemporary readers would have assumed: that assigning allegorical meanings to ecclesiastical actions is neither an escape from the present nor a mere psychological enrichment; it is simply how the Church approaches reality, and it is not meant to exhaust the meaning of that reality any more than the allegorical destroys the literal or the sacramental destroys the natural. As such, the *Speculum*’s method offers an alternative entrance — compared with a *summa* like the *De Sacramentis*, or a specific treatise like Richard’s *De Trinitate* — into the core of Victorine theology. If the *Speculum* models the Church’s mystical approach to signs, this approach will gravitate to certain theological emphases and convictions. Reorganized under standard “systematic” categories, the second part of this dissertation describes such a theology. Before closing this first part, however, I intend to explore a major example of the *Speculum*’s allegorizing with an eye to whether my reading method, with its axiomatic assumptions about signs, Victorine reformation, and medieval liturgy, really matters.

A close reading on the first part of the Mass

The discussion on the mass in chapter 7 is probably the most fitting place to start, given its larger topical continuity with medieval *expositiones missae* and similar works. The text opens with the reminder that the patriarchs and prophets, “hoping and foreknowing” before the Incarnation, “sent ahead longings, works, praises, and prayers.”⁴⁶ Hence the introit “expresses the desires of those expecting with foreknowledge,” and its constituent parts — the psalm verse and the *Gloria patri* — represent, respectively, the works and the praise, while the ninefold *Kyrie* which follows signifies their prayers, “which they multiplied up to this point, that the grace of the highest Trinity would conform them through the advent of Christ into nine distinct orders of angels.”⁴⁷

As I argued above, there is no clear distinction to be made between words like “express” or “signify,” though the variety itself suggests the author’s comfort with multiple layers of signification. There is nothing visibly imitative about the gloss on the introit. Certainly the allegorical type has a connection with Christ, but not as a mimetic repetition of Christ’s life. Rather, as the Old Testament saints anticipated Christ, so we who begin the mass anticipate Christ. The concern here is primarily in a deepened understanding of what is happening in the present – the introit and the entrance rite – rather than a simple recollection of the past. The reference to the past, indeed, serves to provide a certain historical continuity that places the Eucharistic assembly in the same real world that anticipated the advent of Christ. The introit’s mystical sweetness therefore

⁴⁶ *Speculum*, 356D

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 356D-357A.

consists in the ability of a single sung text to draw together multiple ages in the same moment, directed in praise of the same Lord. Far from a fanciful escapism, this allegorical explanation grounds the experience of each entrance rite in the history of humanity's slow but steady approach to meeting God face to face. The point is not that the introit is "like" some historical event (in fact it is obviously not very much like it at all), but that it expresses the same universal desire that the Church, in her catholicity, embodies in every age.

As the introit is said, the priest enters the church from the sacristy,

signifying that Christ, thus sought after in the expectation of the peoples, came out into the world from a secret habitation in the heavens, having assumed a most sacred flesh from the incorrupt flesh of the Virgin; or, he came out from a secret chamber, that is from the virginal womb, just as it were the *bridegroom proceeding from his bedchamber* (Ps. 18:6).⁴⁸

Here we have a more clearly imitative interpretation, where Christ's movement from one place to another is symbolized somehow by the priest's movement from one place to another. Of course this image explicitly assigns the priest to the role of Christ — an example, perhaps, of what Mary Schaefer sees as a creeping clericalism in the early scholastic period. True as that may be, the text might also be seen as de-emphasizing the priest *qua* priest; what is important here is not the *priest* but *Christ*, and the fact that Christ has come from secret places to visit his creation. The meditation on the incarnation that continues in the next few lines (following the above quotation) confirms that the author is less interested in emphasizing the role of the priest than in emphasizing the condescension of Christ in the Incarnation. "Who shall declare his generation?" he asks, quoting Isaiah 53:8. The awesome generation in question is not that of the priest, but of

⁴⁸ Ibid.

the two-natured generation of the incarnate Son. The doxological language here, beefed up further by allusion to a well-known Christmas hymn by Ambrose,⁴⁹ suggests the desired affective effect: wonder at the fact of history that makes the mass itself possible. This allegorical reference, again, rather than abstracting the worshiper from the ritual moment to an idealized history, brings that history into the present as a directly related chain of events. The priest's entrance means, on a literal level, that the priest has entered the Church; but this entrance *matters* because Christ has entered the world.

The torchbearers and the thurifer enter first, by which “we understand the saints who preceded the New Testament;” then the subdeacon carrying the gospel text, and the deacon who will proclaim the gospel, both representing the saints of the New Testament.⁵⁰ The candlesticks themselves go before the gospel text, because they commemorate the law and the prophets which “beautifully” went before the law of grace. The thurible represents the heart of man burning with charity and giving off the odor of good works, and it goes before the torches and the ministers showing that “the meaning of the incense is the shared things of the saints of both testaments.”⁵¹ The images here again refuse any obvious mimetic symbolism, though the more distant representational possibilities do open up the charge of imaginative fancy. Unlike Amalar or other

⁴⁹ “*From God the Father he proceeds*” (*Egressus ejus a patre, etc.*), 357A, quoting the hymn *Veni Redemptor gentium*, generally sung at vespers on Christmas eve (i.e. first Vespers of the Nativity) or matins on Christmas Day, as well as (in the modern context) at other times in Advent. Quite possibly the line could have been used in other nativity-related contexts at the Abbey of St. Victor and elsewhere. This hymn is full of the historical presentism observed in my earlier look at Victorine sequences, e.g. the final verse:

Thy cradle here shall glitter bright,
And darkness breathe a newer light:
Where endless faith shall shine serene,
And twilight never intervene.

⁵⁰ *Speculum*, 357B

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 357C

commentators, though, the *Speculum* author has not here or elsewhere suggested his intention of unveiling a presumed original intent behind liturgical rites. The rite is there, and this is what he makes of it: a complex interaction between old and new. Indeed, the thurible is an interesting case, because it represents two things: the good works of charity in the Christian soul, and the commonality between Testaments, insofar as these precede the law of grace represented by the evangelical text and the new priesthood.

The movement to the altar, we are told, represents (in the deacon and subdeacon) the apostolic preparation for the Lord, and the altar itself is Jerusalem, from which the early Church preached the gospel.⁵² The general confession is made to purify the hearts of the Lord's servants, and the priest kisses the altar, "signifying Christ who first brought peace to us."⁵³ The gospel book is then kissed from the altar, for the altar "signifies the Jewish people," and the gospel the gentiles who believed; "for Christ gave peace to both, since, being made the cornerstone, he made them both one."⁵⁴ But the priest kisses the gospel book only having been offered it by the deacon, "because the preachers have restored and presented the Gentiles to Christ, to whom he himself did not preach."⁵⁵

Again, what does this interpretation have to do with the present, and with the Church's work in beginning the Eucharistic liturgy? The idea of Christ reaching the gentiles through his apostles offers one of the few more truly explanatory comments in the *Speculum*; the allegorical interpretation could offer a symbolic reasoning behind celebrating the liturgy a certain way. But on the whole the emphasis remains in drawing

⁵² Ibid., 357C-D

⁵³ Ibid., 357D.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

broad connections between historical events, suggesting the reliance of the new on the old, and the old on the new. This interrelationship is imaged, for the *Speculum*, by the movements at the altar, which are, from a lay perspective, a seemingly arbitrary dance.⁵⁶ The allegory, then, offers pastoral explanation here too: this is what is going on when your sacred ministers keep moving back and forth and handing each other things and performing ceremonial osculations. But does the author intend to say that this is *why* the movement happens? Possibly. The play-by-play observations do, in this case, come across as a little tedious. At the same time, these explanations lead up to the conclusion of the entrance rite, when the sacred ministers actually arrive at the altar to do their principal work. That is, the quick multiplication of images and meanings suggests the rapid folding up, at the ascension of the altar steps, of the universal experience of history. All things, old and new, Jewish and Gentile, lead *here*. In a way then the final ascent is an end to the allegory. The meanings of individual ceremonial acts, textured as they are by symbolic connection, fall away as the priest subtly intones the angelic hymn from the center of the altar: *Gloria in excelsis Deo*.

The *sotto voce* proclamation, reminiscent of the quiet night-time birth of the Messiah, gives way to the chorus, like the angelic host that first sang that hymn in Luke's gospel, "when God declares the shadow of the law to be no more."⁵⁷ This is certainly a moment of mimetic drama, at least in some limited ways: the quiet intonation recalling the quiet birth, and the loud choir recalling the angelic chorus. But the purpose of this

⁵⁶ Though it is hardly the medieval Roman Rite, I personally sense a continuity here in high church Anglican practice mimicking Tridentine ritual. Masters of Ceremony and vergers routinely speak of the liturgical "choreography," and I distinctly remember one older deacon (formerly a schoolmaster) once shoving me in the right direction when I ended up in the wrong place.

⁵⁷ *Speculum*, 358B-C.

recollection is “rememorative,” in Hardison’s term, for the purpose of the present. The dramatic focus, up to this point in the rite, on the ascent to the altar and the singing of the angelic hymn, suggests the movement from one place to another. The assembly is present, through memory, in Bethlehem of Judea. But the observance of the nativity has its own allegorical significance, as the *Speculum* suggests elsewhere,⁵⁸ and so it is hardly right to see this comment on the Eucharist as another devotional exercise focusing on the birth of Christ. As before, it is implied that what the Church does in ascending the altar for Eucharist is as important as the greeting of the Christ-child at his nativity. The recollection of history is not meant to explain or describe what the liturgical action means so much as it is to show why they matter. This is the story (the Incarnation) in which this story (the mass) takes place. It is the same story. We are there and they are here, and uniting it all is the one Christ.

There is no guarantee, in the end, that the *Speculum*’s interpretation of ritual will be pastorally or devotionally or theologically useful; yet this particular “speculative” method of allegory, far from indulging in a fanciful historicism that robs the rite of its intrinsic meaning, seems clearly oriented to the enrichment of that intrinsic meaning. Taken within a Victorine context, where salvation history is the starting point of Christian reflection and action, an allegorization of the liturgy lends itself to a strongly ecclesial narrative of ceremonial action and physical sign. The liturgy is not “about” history, if by that we mean allegorical history is its true, ultimate, or only *ratio*. Rather, the liturgy exists in the Church’s historical situation because history is, in the Christian view, *liturgical*, expressing God’s providential ordering of time for his glory and the salvation

⁵⁸ See 348D in the chapter on the church year.

of souls. We need not separate the two concepts; indeed, the *Speculum* encourages a conflation of past and present within the signifying world of the Church's mysteries.

PART 2 ***ECCLESIA MYSTICANS***

INTRODUCTION

This second part of the dissertation presents primary theological *loci* from the view of the *Speculum*'s ecclesial centering on the mysteries. While the *Speculum* avoids overtly systematic attempts at addressing Christian doctrine, its mystical method implies, and at times openly presents, unique formulations of classic doctrine. The “ecclesiastical” mysteries (the subject of the *Speculum*) are a lens through which theological mysteries can be “mystically” read. They offer an approach to Christian doctrine that situates it firmly within the mystical and liturgical vocation of the Church. That is, there can be no purely descriptive theology any more than there can be a purely “significant” sign: nothing is idle in the formation of the soul and its movement to (or from) God. The *Speculum*'s vision for the centrality of mystery thus has profound implications both for theological reflection and the life of the Church.

Rather than go through the work with its own chapter headings (as a running commentary on a running commentary), I propose here a reading of the book with an eye to its theological content. If, as I have argued in part one, the *Speculum*'s primary goal is less exegesis than formation in *mysticatio* — discovering the “sweetness” in the whole of the Church's sacramental life in the world — it will come as no surprise that its theological vision will reveal itself as mystically contained within its reading of the Church's mysteries. These theological topics are all, intrinsically, ecclesial, for they are mystical present in everything that the Church does (*viz.*, her “liturgy,” hence they are all likewise liturgical). The Church does not *have* a soteriology; the Church *lives* a

soteriology. This deeply ecclesial situation of Christian theology provides both an historical heuristic for understanding Victorine thought, as well as a possible alternative for modern systematic method.

CHAPTER 4 TRINITY, CREATION, AND CHURCH

I. Trinity

The *Speculum*'s final chapter, "On the Matter of Sacred Scripture," concerns the Trinity. It is unique among the work's chapters in its brief but specific attention to the central question of Christian theology without reference to Church liturgy or symbolism. In its content the chapter is hardly unusual: it follows a very clear line of thought from Hilary, Augustine, Hugh, and Peter Lombard, borrowing freely from Hugh's *Sententiae de divinitate*. Following the discussion in chapter 8 on words and things, this chapter turns to the "thing" which above all is to be "enjoyed," namely the Holy Trinity. The text then takes up the classic quest for an "image" of the Trinity in creation, using both the power-wisdom-goodness triad and the Augustinian trinity of the mind — memory, understanding, and love.

Given the extensive borrowing and repetition at work, it is unnecessary to argue for the presence of a unique Trinitarian theology in the *Speculum*. However, the classic Latin Trinitarian discourse is here employed in a specific way due to its context. Why does a text which seems so focused on the explication of symbols, on the signification of things, turn at the end to a more scholarly discussion of Christian teaching? There is nothing obvious about this turn, not least because our author has concerned himself from the start with the "ecclesiastical mysteries." Is the Trinity an ecclesiastical mystery? It seems unlikely that any twelfth-century theologian would say so; not, that is, without offering a clear distinction between different senses of the word "mystery" that guards

against the idea that a church building and the divine substance are two “things” of the same order of reality. But no such explanation or distinction is offered.

We might, perhaps, consider an interpretation of this turn as the last movement in a gradual course of ascent: from the literal ground of the church building in chapter 1, through the outward signs and sacraments up to the most holy sacrament of the altar in chapter 8; from this point we ascend higher to the *materia* which stands behind and above all these things. Such is a possibility, of course, except for the fact that the *Speculum* on its own terms does not consider this notion of ascent. Nowhere in the text does it present the idea that its movement, as a whole treatise, moves from lower things to higher things.¹ We cannot, in other words, overlay a simplistic version of Dionysian hierarchical movement on the *Speculum*’s theology.

This is not, however, to say that there is nothing like a Dionysian mysticism present. How precisely Dionysian (or Hugonian) the author is or means to be is not my exact concern; the question is how the text imagines its own work. And on that point I suggest that the Trinitarian teaching of chapter 9, hackneyed as it may seem, stands in direct continuity with the text’s treatment of all the other “mysteries” of the Church: the goal is not to *explain* but to *use*.

On consideration, this goal is compatible with much earlier reflection on the Trinity. Neither Augustine nor Hilary nor Hugh would claim that their Trinitarian investigations are meant to “explain” the Trinity to the end of total comprehension. In Book I of the *De Trinitate*, Augustine warns against those who

¹ The language of ascent is of course present in many individual places: prayers rising to heaven like the incense, hearts ascending to heaven, etc. But these ascents are present within the explication of the mysteries; the whole project of explication is not itself considered an ascent.

strive to climb above the created universe, so ineluctably subject to change, and to raise their regard to the unchanging substance which is God. But so top-heavy are they with the load of their mortality, that what they do not know they wish to give the impression of knowing, and what they wish to know they cannot; and so they block their own road to genuine understanding by asserting too categorically their own presumptuous opinions, and then rather than change a misconceived opinion they have defended, they prefer to leave it uncorrected.²

What Augustine wants are “reasons,” not for the Trinity *in se*, but for the orthodox dogmatic vocabulary that the Church uses for the Trinity.³ He wishes to “understand” God, but this is before all else intellectual “sight”: “I have sought you and desired to see intellectually what I have believed.”⁴ The understanding of the Trinity is less a definitive comprehension than the opening of the intellect to the divine self-revelation which accompanies the complete reformation of the human soul: “Let me remember you, let me understand you, let me love you. Increase these things in me until you refashion me entirely.”⁵

Following this tradition, the *Speculum* is less interested in what the Trinity signifies than it is in how to make sense of the way that the Church dogmatically speaks of the Trinity. Arguably, then, the problem of interpreting the presence of this apparent theological excursus is solved by a simple correction of perspective: the final chapters only present a problem if we assume *a priori* that the earlier chapters intend to explain in a way that these latter chapters do not. My central claim from part one of this dissertation is that the liturgical explanations are no more exhaustively descriptive explanations than the dogmatic theological explanations are meant to be. They are, rather, examples of the

² Augustine, *De Trinitate*, I.1 (p. 65 in Hill)

³ Ibid., I.4 (67 in Hill)

⁴ Ibid., XV.51 (436)

⁵ Ibid..

Church's vocation to signification. To explicate Trinitarian doctrine is to explain how the language works and why it makes sense, not to justify it or give it a meaning that it hitherto lacks.

The author considers the Trinity, along with the Eucharist, to be one of the two subjects most prone to problematic *dialectica*. After rebuking the dialecticians in the chapter on the mass, he then proceeds to ask his own questions about the body and blood. But by doing so he does not intend to suggest any question as to the fundamental givenness of the dogmas that cannot be disputed “without peril,” rather to investigate instead “what increases the merit of faith.”⁶ Such a proposition is striking. Faith in the Church's central dogmas, like the authoritative language surrounding the Trinity and the Eucharist, remains good as a kind of baseline merit. At the same time, it is possible to increase — to “sweeten,” perhaps? — this merit through investigation. The implicit difference between such investigation and “disputation” rests in the starting point. Disputation, for the *Speculum*, is the kind of thinking prone to question what should be taken for granted. By contrast, the *Speculum* intends to illuminate what is already given, to open up its interior nectar.

For the *Speculum*, like its traditional influences, created things are useful for the investigation of uncreated things: “Indeed the three which are found in the outer creature are such signs, but not the image. Indeed, although through immensity of creatures the power of God is able to be investigated, at the same time immensity *is not* power, or beauty wisdom, or utility goodness.”⁷ Note the specificity of the language here. Signs

⁶ *Speculum*, 362A.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 378B.

(e.g. immensity) are not the same as an image; signs point to other things, while the image of something somehow participates in what it is. Although in this case it may be simply that the image is a fuller kind of sign. Immensity, power, and beauty are signs in that they illustrate or point to divine attributes but do not “image” their triune nature.

Yet these signs nonetheless allow other things to be investigated. Signs do not “mean,” but they do “point.” This is a somewhat obscure distinction to make, and the language of *significare* and *designare* make it difficult to assert as an absolute principle of vocabulary. But in the discussion of the Trinity it becomes clear that the signs do not “mean” or “express” if by that we mean a one-for-one equation; nor do they simply move one upwards in the inexorable ascent towards God. Signs can be, as Augustine notes on his reading of Genesis, stumbling blocks that goad us to deeper understanding.⁸ This Augustinian principle is close to the heart of what the *Speculum* means by “mystery”; the mysterious is not a puzzle to be solved but an invitation to studious investigation. The primary mode of ecclesial signification is directional rather than definitional. Here, once again, the theology of the sign argued above emerges as the clearest way to understand the text. While, on the one hand, it retains a thoroughly Augustinian vocabulary, it resists using this in a way that makes signs merely conventional or convenient. God is actually able to be investigated through such signs, even if they do not lead one clearly to an explanation of Trinitarian doctrine. Signs may not participate in what they signify in the way that an image does, but they do enable *us* to participate in what they signify.

The Trinitarian investigations of chapter 9, then, come as yet another moment, albeit a centrally important one, in the *Speculum*’s proposal of *mysticatio*. All things,

⁸ See especially *de civitate Dei* XI.19.

even the most central dogmatic symbols of the Church's faith, are useful in spurring the soul to deeper communion with God. The reminder at the end of chapter 9 (and the book) that Trinitarian investigations are themselves spiritual exercises (knowing, understanding, loving) rather than a more purely speculative *disputatio* underlines the whole work's thematic argument, namely that the investigation of the Church's mysteries is not for the sake of knowledge in itself ("*this* means *that*"), but for the work of restoration. It is salvific.

God has, according to the *Speculum*, provided multiple approaches to knowledge of the divine substance — both reason and creation by nature; both inspiration and teaching by grace.⁹ This comprehensive approach to knowledge undergirds the Hugonian principle of universal utility so observed and repeated by the *Speculum* author.¹⁰ The person who embraces the mysteries and follows where they lead gains more than deeper understanding; she participates in the work of reformation and restoration. Restoration is not *demystification* but *remystification*, which is to say a restoration and even an increase of the true power of both things and signs to assist the growth towards union with God.

II. Creation

The Church and her mysteries, like the scriptures themselves, are concerned primarily with this work of restoration, which is distinct from the work of creation. Indeed, the *Speculum* asserts that the subject of creation is the concern of the pagan

⁹ See especially the first part of *Speculum* Chapter 9, 377A. For this idea in Hugh, see the *Sent. div.* and especially Dale Coulter's introduction to this paradigm (*Trinity and Creation*, 106).

¹⁰ See above, Ch. 2, n. 37.

writers.¹¹ Hence the *Speculum* provides no specific theological account of creation. The only specific reference to the creation story comes, as referenced above, in the final chapter on the matter of divine scripture. Even in the book's copious scriptural quotations there are no allegorical references to Genesis 1-3.

On the one hand, there is no obvious reason that a commentary on the Church's sacramental and liturgical life should say anything about the Christian doctrine of creation; hence we should avoid any strong argument from silence. On the other hand, I note that the lack of any explicit consideration of creation — even when the text *does* deal with so many other central theological themes — follows fittingly a certain subtle emphasis that I will explore elsewhere in this dissertation, namely, the assumption of a hierarchy of goodness that distinguishes creation from redemption and that, more pointedly in the context of this work, distinguishes, in a preferential way, the ways that the Church's sacraments and the mysteries are “more” and “better” than the bare meanings and facts of creation, whether visible or invisible.¹²

It seems clear in fact that the *Speculum* author intended to treat these subjects at greater length in other works, which have either been lost or were never written: “But, concerning this joy and this weeping, I will explain more fully, separately in two books, of which the one will be called *Paradisus*, and the other *Cur flet qui gaudet*.”¹³ This particular passage deals with the Fall, in connection with the Tract and the Alleluia before the Gospel at Mass. While the Alleluia suggests joy, the Tract suggests weeping,

¹¹ *Speculum*, 376A: “Est autem materia divinae Scripturae specialiter opus restaurationis, id est incarnation Verbi cum omnibus sacramentis suis, sicut opus creationis materia est physicorum gentilium.”

¹² This is the primary focus of my discussion of Christology and eschatology in those chapters.

¹³ *Speculum*, 360B: “Sed de hoc gaudio et de hoc ploratu plenius explicabo divisim in duobus voluminibus, quorum uni erit nomen Paradisus, et alteri Cur flet qui gaudet.”

and at times the Church does both in near conjunction, because the Church both looks forward to “the paradise of celestial riches” and cries over her fall “from the earthly paradise.”¹⁴ Note here again the conflation of the Church with general humanity: it was the Church that fell in the garden, not simply Adam. The Church’s joy and weeping in the mass is thus the joy and weeping of all creation in the aftermath of the Fall.

While the *Speculum* lacks an explicit discussion of creation itself, it speaks more clearly about the Fall. The Tract, as an example of the Church’s lamentation, traces its meaning back to the Fall. The Alleluia is silent from Septuagesima through Lent because “the punishment in which man fell through guilt is recalled to memory by the Scriptures.”¹⁵ The office of nones, the afternoon office, commemorates the hour when Jesus died on the cross, which is likewise “that same hour in which man was expelled from paradise;” and, as in the hymn *Pange lingua*, the tree of the cross recalls the tree of temptation in the garden.¹⁶

What, for the *Speculum*, is paradise? In other words, does the *Speculum* offer a particular view about what Adam/Humanity/Church fell *from*? The word “sin” (*peccatus* or *pecco*) is used only rarely in the text — nine times by my count, usually in passing reference to the need to be made clean (*mundus* or *mun-do*). But sin also “reigned” in the time from Moses (i.e. the law) to the Incarnation, “not on account of ignorance as death

¹⁴ Ibid.: “Considerans enim in paradiso divinarum Scripturarum, quod per paradisum virtutum ad paradisum coelestium divitiarum perventura sit, exsultat; respiciens autem quod adhuc in valle lacrymarum retinetur, et quod de terrestri paradiso cecidit, plorat.”

¹⁵ Ibid., 349A: “Et quia poena in quam homo cecidit per culpam, ad memoriam per Scripturas reducitur, Alleluia cantus laetitiae tacetur.”

¹⁶ Ibid., 344C: “In eadem enim hora mori voluit pro homine in qua homo expulsus est de paradiso, et in eadem die hominem per lignum redimere placuerat quae eum per lignum hostis deceperat: *Ars ut artem falleret, Et medelam ferret inde, Hostis unde laeserat.*”

did previously, but on account of the infirmity of the flesh.”¹⁷ This era is represented liturgically in the time between Advent and Christmas. We find these two principal images for sin, then, in the *Speculum*: a kind of sickness that needs to be healed, and a kind of dirt that needs to be washed off. Hence prelapsarian humanity is characterized by implication as healthy and clean. But sin also came with “guilt” (*culpa*), as well as its “punishment” (*poena*), and the principal seasons of the Church year — Septuagesima to Easter (i.e. Lent), Advent to Nativity, Pentecost to Advent, Easter to Pentecost¹⁸ — each figure four eras of history in relation to that punishment:

The first brought in guilt, the second uncovered it, the third removed it through righteousness but reserved the punishment, the fourth shall perfect righteousness and swallow up punishment. The first was guilt and punishment, the second punishment and prophecies, the third punishment and grace, and the fourth grace and glory.¹⁹

Missing in this scheme is the period between creation and fall; there is no time or ritual in the Church that specifically commemorates creation or the prelapsarian state of humanity. All the same, by implication we can again suggest that for this author the creational status of humanity was innocent, clean, and healthy. Beyond this nothing more can be said, and perhaps this is simply because, for the *Speculum*, this first state of nature was frankly not very interesting. Symbolically we might compare this to the author’s lack of interest in explaining the appearance and status of an unvested cleric. The state of grace, and the

¹⁷ Ibid., 349A: “Ab adventu usque ad Natalem Domini, a Moyse usque ad Christum tempus est in quo peccatum regnavit, non propter ignorantiam ut mors prius, sed propter infirmitatem carnis.”

¹⁸ Note that the *Speculum* places these in the order of their symbolic meaning rather than in the order of the occurrence either in the ecclesiastical year or the secular calendar. Epiphany seems missing, but likely it is subsumed into the Christmas cycle. Or perhaps its absence just shows the flexibility of the author’s interpretation, which is less interested in the perfect coincidence of details as it is in the broader, mystical background.

¹⁹ Ibid., 349C-D: “Primum culpam intulit, secundum detexit, tertium eam delevit per justitiam sed reservavit poenam, quartum perficiet justitiam et absorbebit poenam. Primum fuit culpae et poenae, secundum poenae et prophetiae, tertium poenae et gratiae, quartum gratiae et gloriae.”

eschatological hope of glory, is greater. As Paul writes, “The gift is not like the trespass” (Rom. 5:15).

Moving beyond specific accounts of creation as a moment in salvation history, we can generalize the *Speculum*’s doctrine of creation as a conviction that “things” matter, which is to say, creation is good; which is to say further: creation is “useful” in the Augustinian-cum-Lombardian sense presented in chapter 9, where God alone is to be “enjoyed.”²⁰ This basic principle lies embedded in the treatment of scripture, taken almost word-for-word from Hugh of St. Victor, in which both “words” (*voces*) and “things” (*res*) signify, unlike the books of the pagans where words alone signify.²¹ In scripture things themselves can signify, because the “things” are appointed by God: “Just as a man indicates his will to another through words, so God indicates his will through created things.”²² This comment taken from Hugh’s teaching underlies, in a way, the whole vision of the *Speculum*. Scripture is notable for interpretation because *both* words (as divine utterance) and things (as the content of divine utterance) matter; but behind this assertion stands a deeper justifying conviction that all created things, not just those mentioned in scripture, are already by nature the expression of divine will. All things are in some sense mysterious because they proceed from the will of the uncreated mystery.

We might bring this central conviction back to the *Speculum*’s earlier instruction to “observe each thing mystically.”²³ For a thing to be a thing is to be a created thing and to be, therefore, part of God’s self-expression and will. All creation therefore has, by

²⁰ Ibid., 376C-D; cf. Peter Lombard, *Sent.*, I.1-3 and Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, I.2ff.

²¹ *Speculum.*, 375B-C and Hugh, *Sent. div.*, Prol. (VTT 1, 119).

²² *Speculum*, 375C: “Sicut enim homo per voces alteri, sic Deus per creaturas voluntatem suam indicat.” Translation by Christopher Evans, VTT 3, 489.

²³ Ibid., 335D: “Notate singula mystice non enim est hic quidquam otiosum.”

implication, “mystical” potential to be uncovered through human work and observation. For the *Speculum* writer, all interpretation and explanation of ecclesiastical symbolism stands within this broader conviction of creation’s mystical signification.

The *Speculum*’s work, though, is the mysteries of the Church, not of all creation. Yet one of the Church’s own mystical referents is indeed the whole world which is therein contained. The building’s four walls “are Jews and Gentiles coming to Christ from the four corners of the world.”²⁴ The central roof of the church “signifies the world redeemed by the precious cross; on account of which the cross is placed above it.”²⁵ This mirror between the Church and the world continues in various allegorical readings on ritual actions:

- the bishop’s entrance at the dedication || Christ’s entrance into the world²⁶
- the start of vespers at the end of the day || the “evening” of the world before Christ’s advent²⁷
- reading the Pentateuch during the Gesimas || Adam/humanity’s ejection from Paradise²⁸
- three masses of the Nativity || three principle eras of human history²⁹
- the priest entering the church at mass || Christ becoming manifest at birth in the world³⁰

²⁴ *Speculum*, 335B: “Superaedificati parietes, Judaei sunt et gentiles de quatuor mundi partibus venientes ad Christum.”

²⁵ Ibid., 336B: “Vel tholus mundum significat pretio crucis redemptum; propter quod crux ponitur super ipsum.”

²⁶ Ibid., 338C: “Pontifex intrans pacem domui precatur; et Christus ingrediens mundum pacem inter Deum et homines facit.”

²⁷ Ibid., 344D: “Succedunt Vesperae, in quibus commemoramus adventum Domini, *Vergente mundi vespere*.” The quotation is from the Advent hymn, *Conditor alme siderum*.

²⁸ Ibid., 347B: “Ut ergo memores sint captivitatis suae qui sursum tendunt, legitur primum de Adam, qui in principio mundi factus est, et de ejectione ejus de paradiso...”

²⁹ Ibid., 348C-D: “Prima vero missa in nocte Natalis celebrata, tempus ante Moysi typice designat. Secunda, quae aurora apparente celebratur, tempus scriptae legis et prophetarum ad memoriam revocat quia per legem et prophetas lux de Christo velut diei nuntia mundo apparuit. Tertia vero, quae in media diei claritate festivius celebratur, ad tempus refertur gratiae...”

³⁰ Ibid., 357A: “Interim autem dum haec dicuntur vel aguntur, sacerdos sacra veste indutus de sacra aede procedit, significans quod Christus exspectatio gentium sic desideratus carne sacrosancta assumpta de Virinis carne incorrupta, de secreto habitaculo coelorum egressus est in mundum...”

The Church and her mysteries point to Christ, but they also point to the world and its history. The meaning of all things is found therefore not just in all things themselves and their potential direct reference to God, but in the Church, because the Church unveils the mystery of Christ, through whom all things were made, and who is “Lord of all things by creation.”³¹ It is only in the Church that the meaningfulness of creation is fully accessible.

Though this may seem an extremely ecclesio-centric view, it is worth noting that even the members of the Church, though they participate in this great mystery encapsulating all things, need the skills and resources of the liberal arts to understand “things” in themselves; without this knowledge it is impossible to understand how created things can signify other things.³² Though the *Speculum* mimics Hugh in this line of thinking, it does so in a strikingly different order. The *reportatio* of Hugh’s theology, summarized in the *Sententiae de divinitate*, places this discussion in a prologue before launching into treatments of various classic theological questions. I would argue that the placement of these comments near the end of the *Speculum*, similar to the placement of the final chapter on the Trinity, is characteristic of its author’s central conviction that the Church, as a mystery unveiling other mysteries, is the starting place and indeed the necessary ground for all of the kinds of intellectual exercise and argument that were becoming increasingly important in the academic scene of the 12th century. One detects, at the end of a treatise full of warmth, a sharp note of warning against those whose primary mode of seeking God is *disputatio*.³³ And, though it would be unwise to

³¹ Ibid., 373D: “... per Christum, per quem omnia facta sunt, qui, Dominus omnium per creationem, factus est spiritualiter noster Dominus, assumpta humanitatis nostrae natura.”

³² Ibid., 375Cff: “Unde claret scientiam atrium ad cognitionem divinarum Scripturarum valde esse utilem...”

³³ Ibid., 380D: “Verius enim invenit amans quam disputans.”

pigeonhole the *Speculum* in regard to later medieval and early modern debates about nature or the validity of Aristotelian natural philosophy, it does seem clear that its doctrine of creation is not something to be properly considered apart from the Church.

III. Ecclesiology

At the risk of belaboring the point, the *Speculum Ecclesiae* is a book about the Church. As I have argued in part one, its liturgical theology is fundamentally identical with its ecclesiology. But beyond its ecclesial ritualism, we can further observe a set of basic orientations embedded in how it does speak about the Church when it explicitly speaks about the Church.

First among these is the grammatical baseline of ecclesial subjectivity. Throughout the *Speculum*, the Church is treated not as object-to-be-studied but as active agent. The vast majority of lexical instances place *ecclesia* in the nominative case. When someone is signifying, designating, expressing, commemorating, suggesting, it is in almost every case the Church who is so doing. “The Church,” then, is literally at the center of all the mysteries. We should note just how provocative this claim might appear: the Church is the one who “signifies” things, not Christ. The Church is the one who “designates” things, not God. And this, I would suggest, touches yet again the text’s central preoccupation with the economy of signification. If God, or the incarnate Son, had “designated” or “signified” certain things, they would be in the realm of ordered, hierarchical symbols, perhaps along the lines of Pseudo-Dionysian objective symbolism. Indeed, the divinely instituted sacraments are just such realities that simply are what they are regardless of how human beings interact with them. Yet for the *Speculum*, other signs

are contingent insofar as they depend on the temporal life of the Church; their symbolic power is not integral to their nature, or their supernatural institution, but integral to their potential incorporation into the divine mission of the Church. Such signs are no less real for this fact.

At the heart of the *Speculum*'s ecclesiology, then, is the sense that the Church shows herself to be the Church in her signs. The actual identity of the Church is not found in signifying activity, of course. The Church is the Body of Christ, which is, along with the body of the resurrected Jesus, one of the two bodies signified by the eucharistic species.³⁴ Yet this Body, in the *Speculum*, is primarily shown by what it does: making things significant.

In this light, the ritual dedication of a church suggests a particular meaning. Consecrating a building is precisely an act of making something significant that was not previously significant. What was once a varied set of materials has been permanently made, through the Church's signifying activity, into something that it was not. A cluster of stones in a particular shape is not a "church" by nature; nor was it dominically instituted as a universal sacrament. It is made so. It becomes significant in a real, abiding way that is neither part of the created order nor part of the language of human convention. For the *Speculum* this consecration of a church building is like the consecration of an individual Christian: "The house to be dedicated is a soul to be sanctified; water, penitence; salt, wisdom; the triple aspersion, the threefold immersion of

³⁴ Ibid., 363A.

those to be baptized.”³⁵ The Church is dedicated just as an individual is dedicated — not from necessity but from the mystery of human freedom.

Moreover, this allegorical movement from physical structure to human person represents a general trend in the *Speculum*’s ecclesiology towards a non-reductive dynamism between the visible and invisible aspects of the Church. It would be typical to think of the physical structure of a church building as an element in the visible element of the Church; indeed the *Speculum* does so, speaking twice in this chapter on the manner that the church’s construction reflects the visible diversity of the Church’s membership. At the same time, the church building represents, somewhat surprisingly, the Church’s invisible and spiritual nature as well. Following the sprinkling of the exterior with holy water, the interior and the altar are asperged as well, “within as it was without, showing the spiritual Church to be sanctified.”³⁶ Again, we might be tempted to think that in such an interpretive work visible things are meant to represent invisible things. But here the movement is more nimble: visible things themselves already have an invisible aspect (like the interior part of a church), just as the “spiritual” things represented by something like a building can be themselves visible (like the variety of people in the Church).

The Church stands as the nexus of this movement between the visible and the invisible, the material and the spiritual, not least because she herself stands with feet in both worlds. Surely this is one way of imagining her identity of as the Body: Jesus unites two natures in one person; so does the Church, in her mysterious personal subsistence, unite the visible and the invisible. Her work of signification points to the fulfillment of all

³⁵ Ibid., 339B.

³⁶ Ibid., 340A.

things in Christ. Yet other things in history point not only to Christ but to *her*: “The former temple mystically exhibited the Church.”³⁷ No wonder then that the *Speculum* author finds, in the Church, mysteries worth investigating. Dwelling in the mysterious significations of the Church’s life connects one with the past, present, and future, with the material, spiritual, and intellectual. To other explications of the Church’s mark of catholicity, the *Speculum* author might add this one: the Church is Catholic to the extent that she universally interprets and produces significance in the world.

The *Speculum*’s primary allegorical habit regarding the Church, in fact, points to the Church’s universality. In describing the psalms at matins, for instance, each psalm designates a particular age’s characteristic membership: first the “private” Church of the Jews, then the Church of the Gentiles, then those who confess the name of Christ at the end of the world.³⁸ In this passage we see clearly the author’s normal tendency to multiply meaning rather than closely define it, even when this can muddy rather than clarify. The five psalms also, of course, suggest the “protection of the five bodily senses,” though the fivefold division does not seem to work as well on the division of the Church.³⁹ In later offices, though, we see the same interpretive tendency: the group of three psalms in lauds, “joined as one finally under one Gloria,” signify the three orders of the Church, those seen in Job, Noah, and Daniel. The author does not explain this division, though he almost certainly alludes to a common trope linking these three,

³⁷ Ibid., 369A.

³⁸ Ibid., 342D.

³⁹ Ibid.

mentioned in Ezekiel 14:14, with the married laity, church prelates, and monks.⁴⁰ The text immediately proceeds to another set of “orders” in the Church: the group of eight psalms expresses “the eight orders which are saved in the Church through baptism just as eight souls were saved through the flood in an ark.” These are, respectively, the apostolic Church in Judea, those Jews who preached to the Gentiles, the believing Gentiles, those “coming to their senses” in Judea, those under persecution (figured previously in the boys of the fiery furnace in Daniel), and lastly those collected from Africa, Asia, and Europe, the three of which are united under one Gloria because they “shall be at the same time and equally glorified.”⁴¹

This image of multiple groups or “orders” being joined together is echoed in the earlier chapter on the church building. The walls and structure of the building are constructed from diverse elements joined by a single charity like mortar.⁴² The walls are built “from living stones” (*vivis lapidibus*), alluding to the phrase from 1 Peter 2:5.⁴³ This particular phrase is repeated twice more — once in the reminder that charity will only bind if the living stones abide in peace,⁴⁴ again in the claim that God constructed the Church “for himself” from living stones and “incorruptible wood.”⁴⁵ The emphasis on the “living” character of the construction argues for the kind of active, dynamic ecclesiology I have been outlining. Being the Church requires an active work towards peace and charity. Simply being present, in a passive way, can in fact lead to the deterioration of

⁴⁰ Bernard of Clairvaux is the most famous example of this division from the 12th century, but it can be found elsewhere as well (e.g. Bede, Rupert of Deutz, among probably others). On Bernard’s use, see John Sommerfeldt, *Bernard of Clairvaux on the Spirituality of Relationship* (New York: Newman, 2004), 6.

⁴¹ *Speculum*, 342D.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 335C.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 335B.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 335C.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 337B.

ecclesial structure: without mortar, the stones will fall apart. The stones are “living” to the extent that they remain joined one to another and together joined to the one Christ.

As I highlighted in the first section of this dissertation, the *Speculum* is in other areas deeply interested in the concept of “joining.” Recall the meritorious felicity produced by the joining of external and internal signs, of visible and invisible. So too does the Church’s mysterious conjunction between visible and invisible, between individual and the whole, between all the different “orders” (whether historical or conceptual), produce a kind of sweetness better than sum of its parts. In a way, then, we might say that for the *Speculum* the Church itself is the proto-sign of her own mysteries. All of the Church’s mysteries flow from the fact that she herself is a mystery in her very mode of signification. It is insufficient, in other words, to insist that the meaning of the Church is her invisible character. While the Church is a spiritual reality, and even certain marks of her identity (unity, holiness, catholicity, apostolicity) remain in a way more credible on an invisible and spiritual level, we are not permitted to simply abandon the visible Church for the sake of her invisible nature.

As Christians have asserted since at least the time of Ignatius of Antioch, the Church is only the Church when she maintains visible continuity with the Church of the Apostles. The *Speculum* makes no direct comments on the nature of apostolic succession (and indeed controversy over that topic is not common in the 12th century), but the doctrine of tactile succession, especially in comparison with something like modern Methodism’s claim to a spiritual apostolicity, presents an interesting practical test case as to how the present ecclesiology might matter. The Church’s agency as significance-maker in the world depends, in the *Speculum*’s view, entirely on her ability to be both

visible and invisible, both physical and spiritual. If she is not tangibly, visibly, historically the Church, her spiritual identity — holding to certain doctrines or practicing certain moral standards — cannot have any real hold in the world. It is only through temporal means that the Church can display the work of redemption in the world. It is only through her active work of *mysticatio* in history that history becomes salvation history.⁴⁶

The *Speculum*'s need to meditate constantly on the Church's historical character becomes clearer in light of this ecclesiological claim. The Church *is* history, in a sense. It is not just that history is an important area of study for the sake of good and proper scriptural exegesis. More critically, the Church stands at the center of history's meaningfulness, for the Church represents humanity's temporal fellowship with God. To insist then that Old Testament stories prefigure stories in the Church, that New Testament stories prefigure the eschaton, and that every small detail in the Church's contemporary life connects with a variety of details from this whole history of past and future, shows not simply what all things mean, but *how* they mean — namely, that the whole possibility of significance is tied up in temporality, and that for there to be any connection between the spiritual and the physical, any meaning at all, requires a Church whose personal agency ties together the temporal and the eternal. Meditating on the Church's ritual, sacramental, and even ornamental features, then, accomplishes much more than a kind of devotional enrichment exercise that helps one feel less mystified by the strangeness of traditional liturgy: it allows the Christian to experience the mystery of the Church's primal identity. If I meditate on the way that a certain ritual action re-presents a certain

⁴⁶ Cf. Chapter 2 above, especially n.20ff.

historical event, I am fundamentally doing what it is that makes the Church the Church. This symbolism is “real,” again, not because of a Dionysian hierarchical objective realism, but because the intellectual movement, the connection of temporal things one to another, and the connection of temporal to spiritual, is precisely the kind of conjunction at the heart of the Church’s whole signifying economy. If I am unable to do this — if my contemplative activity is mere imaginative, fanciful reflection for the sake of my own affective benefit, as Vaggagini and other modern readers would have it⁴⁷ — the Church’s ability to be who she is, to sanctify and “signify” history, becomes mere escapism and not reality.

We can, in the end, repeat the thesis that, for the *Speculum*, all theology is fundamentally ecclesiological and liturgical, for making meaning and explaining it is what the Church does. One can make distinctions between different aspects of the Church’s economy of signs (doctrine as opposed to ritual as opposed to morality and so on), but these are matters of convenience rather than essence. In other words, theology does not express something categorically different than what is expressed by ritual or ornament. We habitually think of theology proper as “higher” than ritual rubrics or the color of a stone pillar, but for the *Speculum* the hierarchy lies less in this order between the visible and the invisible (or the material and the intellectual) than in the order between specific signs and their mode of signification. All things, even the highest theological mysteries, are “ecclesiastical” in just this sense: the Church, in her universal personal subsistence, represents the mysterious continuity between created things and their creator. That is, what *orders* the relationship between lower (physical) and higher

⁴⁷ See above, Ch. 3, n. 26.

(intellectual) things is precisely the power to link such things together. Consider: a chasuble is good; charity is better; putting the two together is better still.

This is another way of explaining why it is that the *Speculum* author is so cautious about disputation. It is not that theological disputation is bad. It is, he would probably say, better in itself than various other things — put Trinitarian speculation on the ontic scales with cleaning up in the sacristy, and speculation wins every time. At the same time, theological learning is even better when put in its proper place: the unifying culture of the ecclesial community. While this is a very Victorine thing to say, the *Speculum* expands this insight into a universal theory of the relationship between these various disciplinary distinctions. Others insist that the theologian should be “one who prays,” or that theology cut off from ecclesial life leads to vice and heresy; the *Speculum* argues that theology, ritual, and morality are intrinsically ordered to one another through the agency of the Church, because it is only in and through the Church that these things are significant.

CHAPTER 5 INCARNATION AND SALVATION

O God, who didst wonderfully create, and yet more wonderfully restore, the dignity of human nature: Grant that we may share the divine life of him who humbled himself to share our humanity, thy Son Jesus Christ; who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.¹

The above collect, with its concept of a “more wonderful” redemption, may or may not have been part of the liturgy observed at St. Victor. If it was known, it is more likely to have shown up in its later adaptation for the prayer of blessing over the water as it is mingled into the wine at the eucharistic offertory. In that prayer, the original petition is replaced with a reference to the water: “Grant that by the mystery of this wine and water we made be made partakers of his divinity who humbled himself to taken on our humanity.”² According to Joseph Jungmann, in his monumental study of the Roman Rite, the incorporation of this prayer (adapted from earlier use at Christmas) started creeping into mainstream use in the Carolingian era and then into the 11th century as a result of

¹ Collect for the Second Sunday of Christmas from the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer*, a translation of an ancient Christmas collect found in the Leonine, Gelasian, and Gregorian sacramentaries: “Deus qui humanae substantiae dignitatem et mirabiliter condidisti et mirabiliter reformasti, da, quaesumus, ut eius efficiamur in divina consortes, qui nostrae humanitatis fieri dignatus est particeps Christus Filius tuus. Per eundem Dominum nostrum.” See Marion Hatchett, *Commentary on the American Prayer Book* (New York: Seabury, 1981), 170; H.A. Wilson’s edition of the “Gelasian” Sacramentary (Oxford: Clarendon, 1894), 6, also in PL 74:1059B; “Leonine” sacramentary in PL 55:146B-C; and “Gregorian” sacramentary in PL 78:32C-D.

² “...da nobis per hujus aquae et vini mysterium ejus divinitatis esse consortes qui humanitatis nostrae fieri dignatus est particeps.” The language can be most easily found in any Roman Missal published between 1570 and the 1960s.

Cluniac reforms.³ Still, it is hard to make any conclusive judgment on whether or not the prayer was actively used at St. Victor.

All the same, I note this prayer because it perfectly summarizes the spirit of the *Speculum*'s central Christological and soteriological principles. God's redemption is "more wonderful" than creation. There is a "more" to salvation in Christ than a mere restoration of what was lost in the Fall. This "moreness" echoes what I have already described as the *Speculum*'s preoccupation with joining, with the greater felicity made manifest when sign is joined with signified, when sacrament is joined to virtue, when nature is joined to grace. Although, as I will show in this chapter, it is this last concept that takes clear ontological priority in the *Speculum*'s system of signification. The Incarnation is the prime source of grace's infusion into nature, of the felicitous joining of visible and invisible. It is in the Son of God made man that what is natural can shine with supernatural grace; it is through the incarnate God and his sacraments that human beings can likewise shine with transcendent significance.

I. Christology

A key image: water and wine

To describe the *Speculum*'s Christology we could do worse than begin with the symbolic imagery given in the prayer above. The mingling of water and wine in the offertory is traditionally described as a sign of Christ's two natures. By the 12th century this was indeed a very old and well-accepted image. Amalar quotes Cyprian on this point:

³ Joseph Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development (Missarum Sollemnia)*, "Part IV, The Mass Ceremonies in Detail — The Sacrifice," in Vol. II of Francis Brunner's translation (Christian Classics, 1986), 62-63.

This joining and uniting of the water and wine is mixed in the Lord's chalice in such a way that their commingling cannot be undone... And so, in sanctifying the Lord's chalice, water cannot be offered alone, in the same way that wine cannot be offered alone. For if someone should offer wine only, Christ's blood begins to be without us; but if the water were alone, the people begin to be without Christ. But when both are mixed and joined to each other in mingled union, the spiritual and celestial sacrament is accomplished.⁴

The wine invariably represents Christ or his divinity, while the water represents either human nature, the Church, the individual soul, or the eucharistic assembly — “us” in whatever form. Farther down the line, William Durand notes that Pope Alexander I first instituted the mixture “to note that there never could have been the salvation of the people without the effusion of Christ's Blood, nor could there be the effusion of His Blood without the salvation of the people,” as well as “so that Divinity and humanity can be understood as being joined in one person.”⁵ The wine and water image, then, can be both a Christological assertion of the inseparable union between Christ's divinity and humanity and, by extension, a soteriological assertion of the inseparable union between Christ and the Church united to him by his humanity.

The *Speculum* alludes to this tradition in two places. First, in the service of dedicating the church, water is mixed with salt and wine is mixed with water. Here the author states that the wine is divinity, the water humanity.⁶ In context, this seems intended to show the way that Christ has inseparably tied himself to humanity in the

⁴ Amalar, *On the Liturgy*, 3.19.27-28.

⁵ Durand, *Rationale IV*, 30, 387. Gratian's *Decretum* notes the canonical requirement of the mixture as dating from Alexander. See *De consecratione* D. II, C. 1, accessible here:

http://geschichte.digitale-sammlungen.de/decretum-gratiani/kapitel/dc_chapter_3_3843.

This law comes down to the present *Codex Iuris Canonici* in Can. 924 §1.

⁶ *Speculum*, 340A.

Church, though it is not clear in this case how the mingled water and wine are used.⁷

Second, in the discussion of the Eucharist, the *Speculum* explicitly brings in the traditional thinking on the “mystery of water and wine”:

Now however let us go back to this: that the priest, as we said above, offers the gifts to be sacrificed — in other words, bread and wine, but also water is added to the wine. Perhaps you wonder at this, but this also is a great sacrament. Because fallen humanity is mortal, this mixed wine signifies humanity united to Christ with the blood of Christ. He who separates the water negates the union of Christ and the Church. Again, these ought to be joined, therefore, because the font of baptism is of no profit without the blood of Christ, nor the blood without baptism; both flowed from the side of Christ. He who removes one does not imitate the mystery of the passion.⁸

Like others in the tradition mentioned above, our author is keen to present a warning implied in the mingling of water and wine. The mixture is permanent, and whoever tries to separate the two things opens himself up to judgment. Distinctively, though, the *Speculum* ties the water/blood mixture back to Baptism: just as the water and wine are mixed at the offertory, so the water of Baptism is unintelligible and “profits nothing” (*nihil prodest*) without the blood; likewise, receiving the blood without baptism accomplishes nothing.

The mixture of water and wine is explicitly labeled a *magnum sacramentum*. As I noted in chapter 1, the text’s usage of sacramental language is traditional in its pre-scholastic broadness of what constitutes a sacrament. Yet here it is also worth noting that

⁷ My guess is that the water and wine are mingled early in the dedication liturgy rather than at the offertory; yet they still represent the gifts of the offertory to be consecrated at the first mass of the newly-consecrated altar.

⁸ *Speculum*, 367C-D: “Nunc autem ad hoc redeamus quod sacerdos, ut supra diximus, offert dona ad sacrificandum, panem scilicet et vinum, sed et vino superadditur aqua. Hoc forsitan miraris, sed et hoc magnum est sacramentum. Unde labilis homo est mortalis, haec misto vino significat hominem Christo unitum cum sanguine Christi. Qui separat aquam negat unionem Christi et Ecclesiae. Rursus haec ideo conjungi debent, quia nihil prodest fons baptismi sine sanguine Christi, nec sanguis sine baptismo; utrumque de latere Christi manavit. Qui unum demit non imitatur mysterium passionis.”

the wine and water is more than simply a “sign,” because it is indeed a sign instituted by divine authority.⁹ The mixture of water and wine is a “sacrament,” I suggest, because it is a sign of the Incarnation itself, which the *Speculum* also describes as a sacrament with two parts, humanity and divinity.¹⁰ The wine/water sacrament is efficacious in its meaning through the sacrament of the altar itself — as the bread and wine become a sacrament, so does the wine and water which preceded it.

A Eucharistic Christology

The formal Christology of the *Speculum* proceeds not primarily from explication of the creed — or even of the gospel narrative itself — but from the Eucharist. On the one hand, this is hardly surprising, given the overall liturgical-symbolic orientation of the book. On the other, it presents a particular opportunity for seeing how such an orientation matters for questions of Christian doctrine. Nowhere here is the notion of *lex orandi* or *lex credendi* invoked, yet the main doctrinal concerns stem less from abstract questions of what one ought to believe than particular questions of how one should rightly interpret what the Church does. For the *Speculum* author, questions on the Eucharist are opportunities for asserting the Church’s foundational authority in regard to disputation or dialectic. Regarding whether the flesh and blood alone are received in the sacrament, or “the whole Christ,” he responds: “I, a son, have taken from Mother Church that the whole Christ is taken and not divided.”¹¹ Over and over again in the chapter on the mass, the *Speculum* returns to this theme of *totus Christus*, insisting that Christ’s integral unity of

⁹ Justification of this claim usually points to (1) the likelihood that Christ mixed water with strong wine at the Last Supper, and (2) the fact of water and blood flowing together from Christ’s pierced side.

¹⁰ *Speculum*, 376B.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 363D.

human will, body, and soul remains tied to his divinity, and that all these are present in the sacrament of the altar.

This theme of the unity of Christ through multiple forms of presence again betrays the work's overall emphasis on unity and *conjunctio* (or perhaps *communio*). Further, the most typical description of this notion is “wonder.” The Incarnation is “wonderful” in all its aspects, and so it is no wonder that the sacraments, as extensions of that great foundational sacrament of God, should likewise be “wonderful”:

All is here and all there, not less in the part than in the whole, not greater in the whole than in the part. And, however many parts you make, the whole is there in each. Do not wonder. It is the work of God. If it is possible to be one in diverse places, why would it not be possible to be whole in singular parts? Both are a wonder, but both are true. But it is not a wonder with respect to its making. For what wonder is it if omnipotence also makes wonders wonderful?¹²

The wonder of the Incarnation gives way to further wonders, none of which are substantially “wonderful” in relation to God but are indeed wonderful in relation to humanity. That the God-Man can be present in multiple places and in multiple forms at the same time is no less wonderful than his very identity as the God-Man.

In another place, the *Speculum* even suggests that the Son's vocation in creation is precisely to make things wonderful: “Indeed the Father, by the Word, created the nature of things, and by the same Christ made [them] wonderful, that common food and drink might become particular food and drink.”¹³ Because the eternal divine Son assumed a

¹² Ibid., 364A-B: “Totum hic et totum ibi, nec minus in parte quam in toto, nec majus in toto quam in parte. Et quotcunque partes feceris, totum in singulis est. Nec mireris; opus Dei est. Si in diversis locis potest esse unus, quare non in singulis partibus potest esse totus? Utrumque mirum est, sed utrumque verum est. Nec tamen mirum est respectu facientis. Quid enim mirum si omnipotens et mirabilis miranda operatur?”

¹³ Ibid., 373A: “Per Verbum enim Pater naturam rerum creavit, et per eundem Christum mirificat, ut cibus et potus communis fiat cibus et potus singularis.”

particular human nature, he universalized the particular and particularized the universal. Bread and wine, “common” things, universal substances, become real signs of eternity through the unity of Christ’s human and divine nature. Nature has, in the hypostatic union, become “wonderful” because it is permanently united to the supernatural and eternal. Nature becomes more than what it is in itself. Natural human beings are in turn made “wonderful” through the sacrament:

By the Word he signifies both¹⁴ whenever he confers such grace to things in order that the man who perceives might be sanctified. He vivifies in order that the one who takes worthily might live. He blesses so that the one who participates in eternity might receive the blessing.¹⁵

The Incarnation then is described as a kind of influx of grace into nature or the spiritualization of nature. Christology for the *Speculum* is through and through tied to soteriology. Note the insistence in the above passages on water and wine: Christ’s blood was spilled *for our sake*, which is to say, the blood is never without the water. This is another way of seeing the “for us men and for our salvation” of the Creed: before coming to the Passion, the Incarnation of the Son of God is already salvific. The prime reality is not the shedding of blood, but the blood itself — “the life,” in the Old Testament refrain — which is always here identified with Christ’s divinity.

While, in creation, Christ was already “Lord of all things,” he becomes “spiritually” our Lord “with the assumption of our human nature.”¹⁶ This is a striking statement. Usually we think of the Incarnation as the place where God comes to meet us

¹⁴ That is, both creating things and making them wonderful.

¹⁵ *Speculum*, 371A: “Per Verbum utrumque significat, dum tantam rebus confert gratiam, ut homo qui percipit sanctificetur, vivificat, ut qui digne sumit vivificetur, benedicit, ut qui participat aeternam accipiat benedictionem.”

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 373D: “Sequitur tandem oratio in fine totius officii ut gratia quae praevenit subsequatur per Christum, per quem omnia facta sunt, qui, Dominus omnium per creationem, factus est spiritualiter noster Dominus, assumpta humanitatis nostrae natura.”

in the flesh. This assumes, perhaps, that God the Son was already “with us” in a spiritual sense of some sort. The Holy Spirit has, after all, “spoken through the prophets” and the God of Israel was known prior to the life of Jesus. And I do not think that the *Speculum* would contradict this normal way of putting it. Still, for this author, the Incarnation is ordered towards the spiritual rather than the corporeal. He argues, in the following passage, that Christ came in the flesh so that we might seek him in the Spirit:

Do you seek the corporeal presence of Christ? Look in heaven. He willed to be with you through corporeal presence at a time — when and for how long it was necessary. He revealed this presence to that age so that, through his presence, that age would be stirred up and pleased to find him in the spirit (*ad spiritualem*). Therefore, he came to you corporeally, that through corporeal presence he might be found in the spirit which is not taken away. He came to you corporeally, not that he might remain here corporeally, but spiritually. Thus, through the assumption of flesh, he came hidden into the world, and according to corporeal presence kept company with men, so that he might elevate them to his spiritual presence. Having completed the dispensation according to corporeal presence, he returned, but, according to the spiritual, he remained. Whence he said: *I will be with you even unto the end of the ages* (Matt. 28). Thus he came to you corporeally that he might remain with you spiritually.¹⁷

At this point it seems that the *Speculum* speaks historically: Jesus lived and walked in a normal, corporeal human way, for a limited time — but the appropriate time — and then went away again, having accomplished the primary mission. That mission was to enable us to find him not in the body but in spirit. He “remains,” spiritually, in a way that presumably he did not prior to having assumed corporeal presence; or, perhaps, it is

¹⁷ Ibid., 364C-D: “Audi ergo: Corporalem praesentiam Christi quaeris? in coelo quaere. Tecum per corporalem praesentiam ad tempus esse voluit, quando et quandiu necesse fuit. Exhibuit ad tempus praesentiam, ut per illam ad spiritualem inveniendam excitaret et juvaret. Ideo ad te corporaliter venit, ut per corporalem praesentiam spiritualis inveniatur quae non auferatur. Venit ad te corporaliter, non ut hic tecum permaneat corporaliter, sed spiritualiter. Sic per assumptam carnem occultus venit in mundum, et secundum corporalem praesentiam cum hominibus conversatus est, ut ad spiritualem elevarer praesentiam, et completa dispensatione secundum corporalem praesentiam recessit, sed secundum spiritualem remansit. Unde ait: Ecce ego vobiscum sum usque ad consummationem saeculi (Matth. XXVIII). Sic ad te venit corporaliter, ut tecum maneat spiritualiter.”

simply that his “spiritual presence” was not able to be fully discerned before his corporeal presence was revealed. Whatever the case, his corporeal presence remains in heaven, where he has ascended to the Father. His spiritual presence remains on earth.

This way of describing the historical circumstances of the Incarnation, as the central story of salvation history, works quite well. But immediately after this analysis, the author continues with a bold series of claims that move clearly out of historical-narrative territory into sacramental theology:

When you hold his sacrament in the hands, he is with you corporeally. When you receive in the mouth and when you chew in the mouth, he is with you corporeally. Finally, in sight, in touch, in taste, he is with you corporeally. And, however long your sense is affected corporeally, his presence is not taken away from the corporeal. However, after the corporeal sense fails to perceive, thereafter the presence is not to be sought, but to be retained in spirit. The dispensation is complete; it is perfected, the sacrament perfected. The virtue remains. Christ passes from your mouth to your heart, not by corporeal eating, but with the soul. He came through corporeal presence that he might be eaten, not that he might be consumed — that he might be tasted, not that he might be incorporated. But when the flesh of Christ is chewed, not the one who is chewed, but the one who chews, is incorporated into the one whom he chews.¹⁸

One sees here an earlier aspect of the Eucharistic piety that blooms and flourishes in the following centuries: Christ is truly seen, touched, and tasted; he is “with you,” he is “corporeally present” so long as the senses last. It does not seem to occur to the author to state here, like Aquinas in his famous hymn, that “taste and touch and vision” fail to discern. Rather, taste and touch and vision actually encounter Christ, the *totus Christus*,

¹⁸ Ibid., 364D-365A: “Quando in manibus tenes ejus sacramentum, corporaliter tecum est. Quando ore suscipis et quando ore manducas, corporaliter tecum est. Denique in visu, in tactu, in sapore corporaliter tecum est. Et quandiu sensus tuus corporaliter afficitur, ejus praesentia non [Col.0365A] aufertur corporaliter. Postquam autem sensus corporalis in percipiendo deficit, deinceps corporalis Christi praesentia non est quaerenda, sed spiritualis retinenda. Dispensatio completa est, perfecta est, perfectum sacramentum: virtus manet. Christus de ore ad cor transit, non cibus corporis, sed animae. Venit ad te per corporalem praesentiam, ut comedatur, non ut consumatur, ut gustetur, non ut incorporetur. Sed quando caro Christi manducatur, non qui manducatur, sed qui manducat, ei quem manducat incorporatur.”

even though he is also *totus* in heaven, and even though he is corporeally present under the sacramental signs of bread and wine. If my argument hitherto on the *Speculum*'s obsession over the reality of signs holds, this moment shows not just a strong sense of “real presence” but further an unusually strong focus on the *literal* aspect of this presence. Strange as it may seem to suggest, Christ does not appear in the Blessed Sacrament under a veil, or disguised, or hidden from the senses. He just appears. This, our author wants to say, is the basic teaching of the Church that we have to receive and deal with as best we can.

At the same time, despite a kind of lingering over this reality, the *Speculum* takes pains to point out that it cannot be arbitrarily prolonged. Once the “dispensation is complete,” once corporeal sense “fails to perceive,” Christ is not to be sought in that way but should be sought spiritually. Each instantiation of the sacrament, then, is a kind of new Incarnation — not a new “body,” of course, but a new “corporeal presence” of the same body. Since Christ assumed humanity fully, and this humanity remains completely united with his divinity, his human corporeality is completely at his disposal and completely available for continued use. Such use is the same now as it ever was: to lead humanity to his divinity. Just as Christ's historical presence in Galilee and Judea were, according to the *Speculum*, for the purpose of showing us his abiding spiritual presence, his sacramental-corporeal presence is ordered to the reformation of human perception so that we may continue to perceive the “virtue” of the Incarnation, that is, God's enduring communion with human nature. The final litany of caveats drives this home: eating Christ does not “consume” him in a comprehensive way, nor does tasting him “incorporate”

him; rather, in “chewing” him we ourselves are chewed, consumed, incorporated into his body spiritually even as our bodies digest the visible signs of his presence.

The spiritual orientation of “corporeal presence,” in the end, clarifies exactly how the author can be so strangely bold in his assertion of Christ’s straightforward corporeal presence in the Sacrament. As always, he is interested in the process, the movement, the comprehensive reforming, restoring movement of the soul deeper into relationship with God. What that means here is that what is mysterious about corporeal presence is itself a gift. It is better, more wonderful, that Christ should make ordinary things wonderful, because this shows us exactly what he was about in the Incarnation. The focus on the *Speculum*’s Eucharistic theology, then, is not the answer to the question “What is it?” but the answer to the question “What is it for?” And the theological process by which we wrestle with Christ’s corporeal presence in the sacrament — our disputation grounded on faith in the Church’s dogmatic starting point, that is, as opposed to posing prior questions assuming its possible untruth — is precisely what leads to finding Christ’s enduring spiritual presence.

The whole theology of “res et sacramentum,” discussed in my first chapter above, and laid out farther down in the *Speculum*’s discussion of the mass, comes out of this broader focus on sacramental teleology. The question of “what it is” — surely the question behind the threefold way of describing that the scholastic mainstream gains from Hugh — comes for the *Speculum* as a consequence of its prior commitments as to what the sacrament is for. It is because we can confidently say both that (1) Christ is corporeally present in the sacrament, and (2) this corporeal presence is intended to teach us to find his spiritual presence, that we can discover the threefold set of signs and

virtues: what is sacrament alone (signs of bread and wine), what is sacrament and power (the body of Christ), what is power alone and not sacrament (spiritual communion). In a way, then, the *Speculum* wants to have the best of both worlds. It wants to say both (1) the signs are the reality, and (2) the signs point to the deeper reality. But this merely outlines what is in the order of knowing as opposed to the order of being: the way that we start to understand what the sacrament *is*, in its most technical and theologically nuanced sense, requires us to first know, on the level of experiential knowledge, that Christ is really present *in the sign*, and not “behind” it somehow. When we are faced with something corporeal, something involving touch, taste, or vision, we should in fact take the opportunity to train our physical senses to recognize this reality, not merely to ignore it and move beyond it to a supposedly greater spiritual thought. We should not, in other words, close our eyes to the exposed Sacrament and ponder the glorified Christ in heaven. We should look — and wonder. For it is in this wonderment over ordinary things made glorious that we prepare ourselves for the ultimate spiritual “incorporation” that is the final end of the sacraments.¹⁹

II. Soteriology

Signs for our salvation

It is a theological commonplace to say that the sacraments were instituted “for our salvation,” echoing the line on the Incarnation itself in the Nicene Creed. Yet the *Speculum* seems interested in the mystery of sacraments as sacraments. Why, in other

¹⁹ If I have correctly described this particular impulse in sacramental theology, it makes sense to see the flourishing of Eucharistic piety (Benediction, Exposition, Corpus Christi processions, etc.) in the 13th and 14th century as natural consequences of a kind of sacramental materialism here embedded.

words, does God not simply give us the virtue or the power of the sacraments (their “meaning” or *res*); why give these things *sacramentally*?

Therefore, it is possible to ask why the Lord willed his flesh to be taken, not the flesh alone, but the flesh and the blood, and why not in the species of flesh and of blood, when he is flesh and blood, and why under a sacrament, and whether the flesh and blood alone of Christ is taken up, or the whole Christ, and if the whole Christ, whether what we usually call the “body of Christ” supposes Christ or the Lord. Now Christ willed that his flesh be taken up by the faithful so that through this eating of flesh he might invite them to the taste of divinity, and that what we carry here temporally might follow to eternal joys; that here it might be for medicine and there for delight. He willed that both be taken, that our body and our soul alike might be glorified with him. He is not taken in the species of flesh and blood, lest the human soul shrink back. and sense be frightened by something to which it is unaccustomed, as when, while blessed Gregory was praying, he found and showed the little finger stained with blood in the chalice. It is taken under the sacrament and not under its proper form so that the faithful might accept what are not seen from those things that are, or because mortal man is not able to intuit clearly what is in the body of Christ, which the disciples experienced in the transfiguration. But it is taken under such a sacrament, that is, under the species of bread and wine, according to this similitude, because bread strengthens, and wine makes glad the heart of man (Ps. 53), and Christ is the virtue and gladness of men and angels.²⁰

The “similitude” of the sacrament — bread for nourishment and wine for gladness — is a well-used trope in the tradition of sacramental theology, as is the basic form of the *Speculum*’s answer to why Christ does not give us his flesh and blood “in their proper

²⁰ *Speculum*, 362C-D: “Potest ergo quaeri cur Dominus carnem suam sumi voluit, nec tantum carnem, sed carnem et sanguinem, et quare non in specie carnis et sanguinis, cum sit caro et sanguis, et quare sub sacramento, et utrum sumatur tantum caro et sanguis Christi, an totus Christus, et si totus Christus, quare usualius dicamus corpus Domini sumere quam Christum vel Dominum. Voluit ergo Christus carnem suam sumi a fidelibus ut percibum carnis invitaret ad gustum divinitatis, et quod hic temporaliter gerimus aeternis gaudiis consequamur, ut hic sit in medicina, et ibi in deliciis. Utrumque sumi voluit, ut corpus nostrum et anima simul nostra cum eo glorificetur. In specie carnis [Col.0362D] et sanguinis non sumitur, ne humanus animus abhoreret, et sensus sibi insolita expavesceret, ut quando, orante beato Gregorio, digitus auricularis cruentatus sanguine in calice inventus ac ostensus est. Sub sacramento et non sub propria forma sumitur, ut fides comprobetur, quae est de iis quae non videntur, vel quia non posset mortalis homo intuitu claritatem quae esset in corpore Christi, quam experti sunt discipuli in transfiguratione. Sub tali autem sacramento sumitur, id est sub specie panis et vini, propter hanc similitudinem quia panis confirmat, et vinum laetificat cor hominis (Psal. CIII), et Christus virtus est et laetitia hominum et angelorum.”

form,” that is, bloody human flesh that might shock our senses and even revolt us.²¹ But beyond these surface answers is a deeper principle: that the unbloody sacrament is more inherently “spiritual.” If we are to “taste divinity” through “eating flesh,” the flesh we eat must not be ordinary flesh but something unusual, something wonderfully different. To be sure, the *Speculum* assumes that the sacramental bread *is* “flesh,” in a fully real sense, but it is flesh under a different form: the species of bread and wine.

Moreover, just as earlier we discovered the significance of wine mixed with water, here we discover the significance of using both bread and wine, both body and blood — another felicitous conjunction. Each, in itself, is the “whole Christ.” Each is salvific and sanctifying and efficacious in uniting us to Christ’s spiritual presence. Yet it is *better* to have them both, because it is better to receive Christ both bodily and spiritually. As with the wine elsewhere, the blood in the sacrament is a sign of Christ’s divinity (even while it *is*, on an ontological level, the substantial Christ), while the body is a sign of his humanity. Following the example of the external special similitude, it is good to be nourished, and it is good to be made glad, but it is best to be nourished and to be made glad: it is best to receive both the Body and Blood so that one can taste and experience both the bodily and spiritual grace of Christ.

The sacramental reception of the Precious Body and Blood are likened explicitly to the disciples’ “experience” in the Transfiguration. There, for a moment on Mount Tabor, physical sight and spiritual vision merged into a unified whole. For the *Speculum*, the form of the sacraments, the way that their system of multi-layered signification works, necessarily follows human needs. The sacraments may not always be what we

²¹ See, for example, Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* III q. 75 a. 5 resp.

want, but they are what we need. In the Eucharist, Christ teaches us, by a slow process of visible signs, to see the ways that he unites all things, visible and invisible, to himself. Indeed, the dual nature of the sacramental species already implies a kind of movement: “... that here it might be for medicine, and there for delight.”²² The sacrament of the altar is supposed to move us from the mere restoration of what was lost (medicine to heal our souls and bodies) to a fuller blossoming of the life of God, the kind of joy and delight that God intends for us in heaven.

The fundamental soteriological principle of the *Speculum*, then, is that the sacraments save us not just by the virtues that they contain, but by their very form. We are made clean, sanctified, and transformed after the likeness of Christ, not simply by a set of graces and virtues handed down through an ecclesiastical system (or through direct divine intervention), but also by the whole means of transferring those graces and virtues. The Church, then, is much more than a temporary way station or important guide on the way to glory: she *is* the way to glory. For it is the Church’s mode of signifying signs that forms us into the new reality of divine life flowing into creation and making it wonderful. In the Church we both receive salvation and learn what it means to be saved in the first place; in the Church we receive virtues and graces through the sacraments so that we can go forth as “mysticating” powers, able to connect the world to its creator through the power of ecclesial signs.

²² Ibid.

The age of grace

As I have argued at length, the *Speculum*'s explanations of the ecclesiastical sacraments lead to a particular mystical approach to the whole Christian life. That life is the goal, not the understanding of particulars brought about by allegorical explanation. In the dedication of the Church, both salt and ashes, signifying doctrine and the passion, are mixed with water. This is not a sign of something to be known, but of an action to be accomplished: "So the people are *sanctified* with the doctrine of faith and *joined* to the memory of the passion of its head who is God and man."²³ It is good that there is teaching, and it is good that the Passion happened. But it is better for us to be joined to them by grace. Simple understanding (*intellectus*) is good, but the participation in mysteries (*mysticatio*) is better. Why? Put simply, knowledge does not save. As St. James writes, "You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder" (Jas. 2:19, NRS). Knowledge is the work of nature; salvation is the work of grace. According to the *Speculum*'s introduction to Scripture,

The subject matter of Sacred Scripture is especially the work of restoration, that is, the Incarnation of the Word along with all its sacraments, just as the work of creation is the subject matter of [the writings of] pagan natural philosophers. But there is a difference [between the two works] because the latter work was completed in six days whereas the former work is completed in six ages.²⁴

Creation and restoration are distinguished here first by their length: six days versus six ages. Elsewhere the author describes the six ages allegorically through various signs (the divine office, especially, but also particular parts of it, as well as the calendar). But here I simply wish to point out the distinction between creation and restoration as, in another

²³ *Speculum*, 340A, emphasis mine.

²⁴ *Speculum*, 376A-B, Evans' translation from *Interpretation of Scripture: Theory*,

way of putting it, the distinction between nature and grace, and the assumption, here and throughout the *Speculum*, that the latter is superior to the former. The fact that restoration takes place over six ages suggests again one of my key claims about this text: that it sees salvation as not simply something given, in a once-for-all way, but rather as something that is grown and developed, something designed to fully transform human history and experience from the inside out rather than simply fix it in a superficial way.

Parts of the office signify “the time of grace,” such as the singing of the *Te Deum* at matins, through which is shown “how manifestly and wonderfully the Church praises God in the time of grace.”²⁵ Here again the note of “wonder” comes out. Grace is, after all, amazing. But in context it is not so much the grace that is amazing but the way that the Church praises God in the time of grace. As has consistently been the case, the *Speculum* dwells on the external signs of the Church’s life as exemplary moments in the work of salvation. Part of salvation then is not simply *that* God has given us grace, but *how* God gives us grace, and the fact that this grace shows itself “manifestly and wonderfully” in the praise of the Church. From the *Te Deum*, the priest “exhorts through a verse, that they might remain in the praise of God.”²⁶ The wonders of praise are not merely tools to move us to a kind of divine knowledge; they are themselves the place where God’s power soaks into the consciousness and the spirit, into the voice and the senses, saturating all things with the grace of God.

Indeed, the *Speculum* employs such liquid imagery for divine grace:

²⁵ Ibid., 342B-C: “Sequitur alta voce: Te Deum laudamus; per [Col.0342C] quod monstratur quam manifeste et mirifice laudat Ecclesia Deum in tempore gratiae. Deinde sacerdos per versum exhortatur, ut in laude Dei permaneant.”

²⁶ Ibid.

Incense, prayers, and oil demonstrate the grace of the Holy Spirit. Of which plenitude: *Like the precious ointment on the head, that ran down upon the beard, the beard of Aaron* (Ps. 132.2), it descended among the apostles and their disciples: who preached the mystery of the cross in the four corners of the world, in cooperation with the Lord.²⁷

Grace runs down and covers everything like the fragrant sacred chrism; it fills the entire body like the smoke of incense fills the church; it fills the whole mind like prayers fill the aural space of the sanctuary. In this passage, too, we see a direct statement of “cooperation” with grace. The Church and her members take an active role in receiving grace and spreading its “mystery” to the four corners of the world — represented, of course, by the four directions of the cruciform church structure. While at moments it may seem (as in my discussion above in the previous chapter) that the *Speculum* is interested in the Church to the exclusion of divine grace, here it is clear that the Holy Spirit infuses life into everything that the Church does. Grace is not opposed to the work of the Church but cooperates with it. In fact, it is the work of the Church, her cooperation, that makes grace visible and accessible in the world. While the Holy Spirit’s grace is certainly the “virtue” and the “power” behind the Church, the *Speculum* insists that we dare not try to separate the *res* from the *sacramentum* that brings it to us; having the grace “joined” with the external sign, in the end, produces a greater and more meritorious felicity.

God has manifested himself “through nature and grace,” that is, naturally “through reason and the created thing,” and graciously “through inspiration and teaching.”²⁸ The author writes this, mimicking Hugh, in the start of his discussion on the

²⁷ Ibid., 340B-C.

²⁸ Ibid., 377A: In baptismo quoque Christi et transfiguratione ostensa est Trinitas cujus imaginem anima quodam modo repraesentat; cui Deus se manifestavit per naturam et gratiam. Per naturam, id est per rationem et creaturam; per gratiam, id est per inspirationem et doctrinam.” The *Speculum* gets this scheme from Hugh: the fourfold division between nature and grace (two sources) and the internal and external foci

Trinity. But, just as that chapter ends with the exhortation to love, know, and remember God — as opposed to simply giving intellectual assent to the idea that God’s triune nature can be represented in this threefold analogy of the human mind — so we might add here that the grace of inspiration and divine teaching is not itself salvific and efficacious until it catches hold of nature. Just as reason and created things do not save us, nor can inspiration and doctrine, on their own, save us. What saves us is bringing our humanity under the power of that inspiration and doctrine, becoming transformed as human beings after the likeness of the God-man, Jesus Christ.

Thus the discussion of grace in the *Speculum* is almost always accompanied by a kind of reminder that grace has to be *used*. This might seem obvious enough in a treatise focused on the Church’s physical and literal habits, yet a work on pure explanation might leave it at explanation. The *Speculum* author wants to know not just what things are but how they can be used fruitfully in cultivating the Christian life of significance. In the office, for example, the chapter (a brief scriptural reading) signifies “exhortation to good works;” the response to the chapter signifies the good work itself, and the verse that follows signifies the “fruit” of good works. All these are concluded with the *pneuma*, and then a collect, “so that the divine grace which precedes all our actions would itself follow close behind.”²⁹ All is grace, before, during, and after our work; but all the same we must do the good work which cooperates with grace, which joins with grace to produce the greater merit.

resulting in four modes of understanding: reason (internal; nature), creation (external; nature), inspiration (internal; grace) and teaching (external; grace). For this idea in Hugh, see the *Sent. div.* and Dale Coulter’s introduction to this paradigm (*Trinity and Creation*, 106).

²⁹ *Speculum.*, 344D. On the *pneuma*, a wordless song (or melisma), see my following chapter below.

While at times the book treats grace as something alongside human works (as with prayers symbolically tacked on before and after something else), at other times it suggests a more intimate, transformative pattern. In the vesture of a bishop, the *poderis* (a kind of alb), because it is made of flax or linen, represents cleanness:

Because just as flax or linen becomes white — which it is not by nature — through the the exercise of purifying, so the saints acquire the cleanness which is not bestowed by nature but through diligence, with the grace of the Holy Spirit helping, while they wear down and purify the body by the exercise of good works.³⁰

The white vestment becomes white “not by nature” but “through the exercise of purifying,” which is to say a kind of purity acquired not through nature but through the diligent application of grace onto nature. Grace is here depicted as something “wearing down” and “purifying” the body through the exercise of good works. A few lines down, the bishop’s gloves signify “the examples of the saints, which must be kept in works.”³¹ Gloves are something both held in the hand and covering the hand — a prime example of grace cooperating with and changing nature. The examples “must be kept” (*habenda sunt*), which is to say: they can be lost. Grace is grace, not necessity. Diligence is required to keep the power of the Holy Spirit operative in the Christian life.

Further, God gives gifts — that is, more grace — to “those who keep themselves in charity,”

... and, for each of his gifts, whether virtues or sacraments, which are guarded through charity, he hands over a singular crown, still by grace alone. He hands over, I say, pointing to free will (*liberum arbitrium*), yet

³⁰ Ibid., 353D. Earlier description of the *poderis* is found in 352D.

³¹ Ibid., 354C: “Per chirothecas in manibus, exempla sanctorum, quae in operibus habenda sunt, intelliguntur, et quod opera ab omni inquinamento munienda sunt naturae, ne modicum fermentum totam massam corrumpat (1 Cor. 5:6).”

still united with grace alone, considering that every good thing is from above, coming down from the Father of lights (James 1:17).³²

The author seems keen to say here that God's grace is truly God's grace — it is his sovereign *liberum arbitrium* that gives, not some kind of obligation to human merit. Still, these additional gifts go to those who guard the gifts that they have already received through charity. That is, there is a kind of graciously merited grace, where God's gifts produce more gifts so long as they are retained and valued as gifts. Moreover, the gifts are not themselves charity, though they are given *with* charity. The *Speculum's* point here is that charity, as the supreme virtue, does not destroy the possibility of other virtues. Indeed it is good to have other virtues added on, which is not to say that charity alone is not enough, but that charity itself “flames up and increases merit” when paired with additional things.

This passage comes at the tail end of the *Speculum's* chapter on the sacred vestments, following the passage on the Virgin Mary's “incomparable felicity” that I examined in my first chapter above. And that analysis of Mary's twofold bearing remains integral to the *Speculum's* Christology and soteriology that I have tried to show in the present essay. In context, the author is considering the value of ecclesiastical vestments vis-à-vis the virtues they represent; that is, he considers the ultimate status of signs as opposed to the things they signify. He argues that, while it is certainly the case that the virtue is better than the sign of a virtue (i.e. charity is intrinsically better than a chasuble),

³² Ibid., 356C: “Sic ergo sua caetera dona remunerat Deus iis qui ea cum charitate conservant, ex quibus ipse omnia cooperatur in bonum (Rom. VIII): et pro singulis suis donis sive virtutibus sive sacramentis quae per charitatem custodiuntur, coronas reddit singulas, sola tamen gratia. Reddit, dixi, intuens liberum arbitrium, et sola tamen gratia subjunxi, considerans quod omne bonum est desursum, descendens a Patre luminum (Jac. I).”

what is better still is to have the two joined together in a single ecclesiastical sign, a sign that actually *is* what it represents — not by mode of the proper sacraments, as instituted by the divine Word — but precisely by human cooperation with grace. So, for example, a priest who is vested in charity, humility, and chastity, *as well as* the ecclesiastical signs of these virtues, becomes, in the joining of internal and external, something greater and more wonderful.

We can apply this theology of the sign directly to our discussion of the *Speculum*'s understanding of Christ and the salvation he offers. First, we should point out that the author's most striking example is precisely that of the great Mother of God herself. It is fitting, then, that her twofold bearing — both spiritual and physical, both with *dilectio* and *amor* — is what gives way to the Incarnation of God the Son, the one who likewise carries in one person both the physical and the spiritual realms. While he himself is the joining of human and divine, this joining of human and divine is made possible by an already present joining of human corporeality and human spirituality in the Virgin. Mary, then, is both a type of the Church and a type of the new humanity begun formally in Christ, for she exemplifies the human ability to join things together, to bring the natural into conversation and communion with divine grace.

Second, Christ himself, the incarnate Son, is without doubt “better,” more meritorious, more felicitous, more wonderful, from a human perspective, than merely his “virtue” or divinity. What is marvelous about the Incarnation is precisely the Incarnation. It is not marvelous that God would be God, but that God would be man. And so the Church's formally declared Christology is in essence the basic justification for any claim about the “betterness” of a sign joined with its virtue. Had the Son *not* united his divinity

with his assumed human flesh, the work of restoration and redemption would be incomplete. Water and wine would remain separate. The Blood (i.e. the Life) would be separate from Body. The Church would be merely a human institution dedicated to signs with no inherent value or potential for human transformation and enlightenment. As it is, the fact of Christ's two natures in a single person exemplifies the Church's ability to personify the union of visible and invisible things and to lead all creation in its liturgical renewal and re-incorporation into the life of the triune God.

Third, while we would be hard-pressed to claim an intentional distancing from traditional understandings of atonement, the *Speculum*'s teaching on salvation rests firmly on the Christology outlined above. That is, what saves individual Christians from their sins is the whole economy of re-signification (or re-mystification) inaugurated by the Incarnation. Obviously, the cross and resurrection are central and essential — as is, more visible in the present text, the mass as a re-presentation of the mystery of the passion. At the same time, passion and death are not isolated from the rest of the story, or, more importantly, from the rest of the signifying economy that they explosively introduce into the world. To compare some caricatured options from the modern era, the *Speculum* teaches neither (1) a purely mental assent to allow Jesus' death to cover the price of my sins, nor (2) a mechanistic ledger approach to merit in which I must balance out sins with ecclesiastical offerings of grace. Rather, it teaches, following Victorine assumptions about the holistic character of Christian life and the need to combine the intellectual, spiritual, moral, and social aspects of existence, that God's grace is freely and abundantly given in the Church. The Church has, to borrow Samuel Wells' phrase,

“everything they need to worship him, to be his friends, and to eat with him.”³³ And salvation means receiving those gifts and being transformed by them, becoming signs of the Church’s dual existence in earth and heaven, and of the way Christ unifies all things in himself.

³³ Samuel Wells, *God’s Companions* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 17.

CHAPTER 6 ESCHATOLOGY

In the previous chapter, I argued that the *Speculum*'s orthodox Christology joins with its unique theology of signs to present a view of salvation focused on the reformation of the human person *in melius*. Salvation involves not merely the forgiveness of sin but the promise of a complete transformation of human interaction with the world of signs; it involves making ordinary things wonderful. Such a salvation is the goal, in fact, of the Church's sacramental system, above all the Eucharist, which orders human signification towards the felicitous "joining" of all things under the rule of Christ. In the present chapter I move deeper into the *Speculum*'s concept of salvation, considering its theoretical description of the life of heaven. I argue that the work's overall theology of signs must be interpreted along with its own particular eschatology. That is, the *Speculum*'s eschatological vision both supports the work's understanding of the Church's signifying economy and follows from it as a theological consequence. This eschatology can be briefly summarized as follows: In the final consummation of Christ's marriage with the Church, *lectio* and *disputatio* give way to *jubilatio*. But, contrary to how it might appear, this celestial joy centers not on the final abandonment of signs but rather in the perfection and glorification of signs. The human meaning-making on earth through the Church's *mysticatio* is ordered to this final perfection of signs in heaven.

I. The last things

We should begin with a sketch of the *Speculum*'s general concept of eschatological realities: heaven, hell, death, and judgment. Of this traditional list, very

little is said concerning anything but the first.¹ We will, on the day of resurrection, finally be free from all sin and error. This truth is signified by the verse at Compline, “Turn us, O God of our salvation” (Ps. 84:5), because, while here we “often err,” we pray “that God might more fully turn us from error.”² Here the final day of judgment is viewed as an occasion for joy, not fear. Indeed we find very little meditation on negative judgment in the *Speculum*. The preachers (signified by the rooster atop the Church building) “announce the coming light while they predict the day of judgment and future glory,” but nothing more is added by way of warning about judgment.³ The only real substantial comment on that subject again comes in reference to Church leaders:

As it is true that those to whom such a great rule was rightly entrusted for the sake of the negligent will be restored and vindicated in the day of wrath, how much more will they tremble at the cedars of paradise if the rod is at all deserted?⁴

Those most in danger in the day of wrath are not the common Christian people but the bishops and prelates who were given the rod to lead them. Again, in the discussion of orders, we find that the presence in some churches of seven deacons represents “seven thunderclaps” calling to mind Christ’s warning: “Every tree that brings not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire” (Matt. 7:19).⁵

¹ In this emphasis of glory over judgment the *Speculum* seems to follow Hugh, Achard, and Richard. On this, and a general overview of Victorine eschatology through these three figures, see Hugh Feiss, “Heaven in the theology of Hugh, Achard, and Richard of St. Victor” in *Imagining heaven in the Middle Ages: a book of essays*, ed. Jan S. Emerson and Hugh Feiss (New York, Garland: 2000), 145-163.

² *Speculum*, 345B: “Novissime succedit Completorium; per quod significatur gaudium, quod (completo electorum numero) complebit Deus sanctis suis in die generalis resurrectionis. In hac ultima Hora dicitur: Convertite nos, Deus salutaris noster, ad hoc insinuandum quod, post omnem perfectionem quae hic haberi potest ubi saepe erramus, orandum est ut amplius convertat nos Deus ab errore.”

³ *Ibid.*, 335D.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 335B.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 350D.

Nowhere does the *Speculum* discuss hell or the devil, except in passing. Any nascent idea of a “purgatory” could only be vaguely sniffed out from the passage quoted about being completely turned from error at the last day. The vast bulk of the work’s talk of afterlife centers on heaven. In fact, it is the vision of heaven that animates much of the *Speculum*’s operative theology.

Unlike the worship of God on earth, where the joy of the saints “is often interrupted,” eternal life for the blessed is continuous and full.⁶ The distinction between these two ages is represented by the presence or absence of the Alleluia at mass. Further, during the Easter octave, “... the Alleluia is doubled, because joy will be there perfectly in eternal life, the body having been glorified with the soul, and the resurrection of the saints completed with the resurrection of Christ.”⁷ Joy in the day of resurrection consists of the joint glorification of body and soul, as well as the reunification of all the elect in a single glorified assembly of saints. I have written above on the *Speculum*’s tendency to point out all manner of “conjunctions,” and this too is a kind of felicitous joining.

Eschatological bliss then means that all that has been separated and disparate, all that has been interrupted through temporality and error, can be finally made whole. In the present age, no one should “dare” to separate the divinity of Christ from his humanity (or Christ from the Church); in the future age all such separations are at last made completely impossible and unthinkable.

⁶ Ibid., 360A.

⁷ Ibid.

In a passage on the Church calendar, the *Speculum* sums up its understanding of how the temporal cycle of observations shows the ages (including the future age) of salvation history:

The quarter between Easter and Pentecost signifies the entrance into the state of eternal felicity in which the *Gloria in excelsis* and the double Alleluia is sung daily... The *Gloria in excelsis* is then sung, because justice and peace shall be fully given in the resurrection, that is charity will be perfected. The double Alleluia is said, on account of the double white garments, because we shall be vested with incorruptible glory. The door of the Church is opened to penitents, because no sinner shall then be reproached, because he shall be fully absorbed by glory. We pray standing, because then we shall not bend the knee to him, but the house of the Lord shall be filled again with glory. But why is it that we do not sing the *Gloria in excelsis* or the dual Alleluia on ordinary feasts unless it is that we do not yet have perfect justice or the glory that we await? Yet the simple Alleluia is sung, because the Church now has the first resurrection. Whence the Alleluia is always sung except in Septuagesimatide (and Lent). Therefore, because this time is a figure of such great joys, the Church sings on Sundays and feasts. But because we are not yet in joy, she is silent in ordinary feasts. Therefore, by the four seasons the state of the Church is varied. The first brought in guilt, the second uncovered it, the third removed it through righteousness but reserved the punishment, the fourth shall perfect righteousness and swallow up punishment. The first was guilt and punishment, the second punishment and prophecies, the third punishment and grace, and the fourth grace and glory.⁸

⁸ Ibid., 349B-D: "Quartum tempus est inter Pascha et Pentecosten et statum aeternae felicitatis significat, in quo Gloria in excelsis quotidie canitur et duplex Alleluia januas; Ecclesiae etiam publice poenitentibus aperimus, genua non flectimus sed ad quid hoc cernimus si mysterium non intelligimus? Gloria in excelsis tunc canitur, quia in resurrectione justitia, id est charitas perficietur, et pax plene dabitur. Duplex dicitur Alleluia, propter duplicem stolam in Albis, quia gloria incorruptionis erimus vestiti. Poenitentibus Ecclesiae janua aperitur, quia [Col.0349C] nullius peccati improprium tunc erit, quia totum absorptum erit a gloria. Stantes oramus, quia tunc non erit pro quo flectantur genua, sed domus Dei replebitur gloria. Sed quid est quod non canimus in privatis feriis, Gloria in excelsis Deo, nec duo Alleluia nisi quod nondum habemus perfectam justitiam nec gloriam quam exspectamus? Tamen simplex Alleluia canitur, qua Ecclesia jam primam resurrectionem habet. Unde semper Alleluia canitur excepta Septuagesima. Quia igitur hoc tempus figura est tanti gaudii, in Dominicis et festis hoc cantat Ecclesia. Sed quia nondum sumus in illo in privatis feriis tacet. Ergo per Quatuor Tempora variatur status Ecclesiae. Primum culpam intulit, secundum detexit, tertium eam deleuit per justitiam sed reservavit poenam, quartum perficiet justitiam et absorbebit poenam. Primum fuit culpae et poenae, secundum poenae et prophetiae, tertium poenae et gratiae, quartum gratiae et gloriae."

Again we might observe the way that, in Eastertide, penitents are “absorbed into glory.” The fourth age, likewise, shall “swallow up” punishment. The author does not seem particularly interested in the idea of eternal punishment or condemnation. The “grace and glory” of this final future age is so overwhelming that its significance spills out into the other ages. The Alleluia doubles in Easter as a figure of this future joy, but even in ordinary time the simple Alleluia remains as a mark of grace in an age of remaining punishment. It is fitting that this vision of perfected justice, peace, and charity comes in a discussion on the Alleluia in the Church’s annual cycle, for it is on that same point that the *Speculum* further develops its understanding of heaven.

II. The *pneuma*

Wordless praise

The most characteristic mark of celestial reality in the Church’s ritual life is the *pneuma*, a term that will require some explication. Describing the form of singing antiphons with the psalms and the office, the *Speculum* notes,

That the antiphon begins singularly from one and is sung communally from the rest signifies that God loved us first that and we ought to respond communally to his love. The *pneuma* in the end speaks of ineffable joy. After the psalms and antiphons, the verse is exclaimed in a high voice to stir up souls so that in work or in thinking we will not become slow in the divine love, and that we might turn ourselves with the whole body both to the east and to God.⁹

⁹ *Speculum*, 341D-342A: “Quod ab uno singulariter incipitur antiphona et a caeteris communiter cantatur significat quod Deus prior dilexit nos, et nos dilectioni ejus communiter respondere debemus. Pneuma in fine loquitur ineffabile gaudium. Post psalmos et anthiphonas exclamatur Versus acuta voce ad excitandos animos, nec in opere vel cogitatione in amore divino quandoque pigritemur, et ut vertamus nos ad orientem et toto corpore ad Deum.”

Antiphons here are short melodic lines attached to the psalms (usually sung both before and after), either drawn from other parts of scripture, the psalms themselves, traditional liturgical texts, or — especially prior to the widespread standardizations of the Roman Rite in early modernity — local compositions. The *pneuma* “at the end” is likely a vocal melisma drawing out the final syllable of the antiphon. It suggests “ineffable” joy precisely because it is largely wordless, an extended melodic treatment of a single syllable, rather than the more text-centric chanting of the psalms themselves. In standard psalm tones, single notes might receive a drawn-out series of syllables; cadences at the end, however, move as syllables change, marked to coincide with syllabic emphasis. The antiphons, along with various other chants of the liturgy, by contrast, draw out an often very simple text into a much longer melody. The shift, then, represents a turn from words to song as the major form of the Church’s expression.

The term *pneuma* for this wordless singing is relatively new in the 12th century. A search of Latin texts will reveal that uses of the term prior to the 11th century generally refer to the Spirit, or spirit, following the Greek, and often with explicit reference to the fact that the Latin authors are importing a Greek term for the sake of historical continuity. By the 11th century, though, we start to see an increasingly common new use referring to a form of ritual singing.¹⁰ It is perhaps not too difficult to see how the word referring to both “breath” and “spirit” could come to mean a “breathy” or “spiritual” kind of singing free from discursive language. Parallel to this lexical development, though, stands

¹⁰ See, as an example of the mid 12th century, the customary of the canons regular at Saint-Lô in Rouen, *Ordinarium Canonorum Regularium S. Laudi Rotomagensis*, PL 147:162Aff. On the development of the term *pneuma*, and its connection with the medieval sequence repertoire, see Fassler, *Gothic Song*, 43ff.

another: the word *jubilus*, which functions synonymously in the 12th century and beyond. We see both terms used interchangeably in the *Speculum*, with a slight preference for *pneuma*, which is, all the same, usually explicitly connected with the concept of joy. The Victorine *Liber Ordinis* does not employ the *pneuma*, but it does reference the *jubilus* as something that can accompany the Alleluia at Mass (the most typical place where it is found).¹¹ As a liturgical concept, the *jubilus* likely goes much farther back in the tradition. The Victorines and others theologians in the 12th century likely knew Augustine's famous comments on "jubiling" in his exposition of Psalm 99: "When someone is exulting and happy he passes beyond words that can be spoken and understood, and bursts forth into a wordless cry of exultation."¹² For Augustine, a "shout of exultation" is an appropriate way to "jubilate" because "we can find no words to articulate the Word," for "he alone is inexpressible."¹³ Whether or not this refers to a specific liturgical practice in Hippo, Augustine's comments suggest the same assumptions about wordless singing that we see in the *Speculum* and other medieval commentaries: the Church is unable to fully express what is inexpressible, but nor can she remain silent. "While you were seeking him you praised him; will you fall silent now that you have found him? Of course not."¹⁴

Margot Fassler has argued that wordless songs like the *pneuma* represent heaven for the 12th century theologians both because "language will not be necessary in Paradise" and because "we do not yet know what Paradise will be like."¹⁵ "Yet the song bursts forth," she continues, for "this church is not afraid to try to sing in the mode of the

¹¹ *Liber Ordinis*, 58.

¹² Augustine, *Exposition of the Psalms*, trans. Maria Boulding (New City Press, 2003), 99.4.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Fassler, *Gothic Song*, 63.

angels.”¹⁶ While the *Speculum* does support both of these contentions, my argument here will be that, while language in Paradise is unnecessary, the Church does, in some sense, retain her use of signs. It would be tempting, based on Fassler’s reading, to suggest that the *Speculum*, with the theological school it represents, sees heaven as primarily a freedom from the temporal means of human signification. Wordless singing represents heaven, in other words, because we have no need of words in heaven: all is sight. Yet I find that this reading stands at odds with the *Speculum*’s commitment to show how heaven and earth can be brought together in the Church’s mysteries. If the wordless *pneuma* is read from within that context, its implicit commentary on celestial joy presents something slightly different (and, I think, more interesting), namely that in heaven the Church’s ability to communicate through signs — for surely music is no less temporally “significant” than words are — is purified, elevated, and perfected. Words become unnecessary in heaven, not because temporal communication is no longer necessary, but because human temporality has been so joined with Christ’s divinity that human signification has transcended its previous limitations. The Church’s ability to signify, to “mysticate” reality and incorporate it into the life of heaven, has reached its final stage. The “mirror” is replaced with face-to-face vision, to use Paul’s image in 1 Corinthians 13, but, if my reading has been correct, the *Speculum* sees the mirror as a training ground for the kinds of communication (in its fullest sense, including both *conversatio* and *communio*) possible *without* the mirror. In the eschaton, words “cease” not because temporal communication has become unnecessary, but because it has become more perfect. The word, having been incorporated fully into the Word, is spiritualized.

¹⁶ Ibid.

Pneumatizing the Church

As I argued in the previous chapter, the Church's sacramental economy makes ordinary things "wonderful" through the power of Christ's Incarnation. Twice in the treatise, the *Speculum* author himself "bursts forth," as it were, with a somewhat novel locution, using the word *pneumatizo* to describe what the Church does. In both cases, he pauses to note exactly how strange this seems, noting in both instances that he speaks "a wonder."¹⁷ These two notable instances should be considered in detail.

In the first, the text continues from the passage quoted above on the use of *pneuma* with psalm antiphons:

Any antiphon expresses charity, without which nothing signified through the psalms is of any profit. But the antiphon begun before the psalm is chanted again whole after the psalm, which signifies that charity begun here shall be consummated eternally after this life, and this will be an indescribable happiness. Thus the *pneuma* is joined with it, indicating the ineffable joy of eternal life, which is such that, while it is here foretasted, can neither be thoroughly expressed nor thoroughly left unmentioned. Whence the Church, with the words dismissed, bursts forth into wonder by jubilating with the *pneuma*, as if she says, *What tongue may here declare, fancy, or thought descry?*¹⁸ Thus the Church also suggests in a certain way, "pneumatizing" (*pneumatizando*) more clearly (I speak a wonder) without words than with words, how great is the joy of heaven, where words shall cease, when all know all.¹⁹

¹⁷ "Mirum loquor" (343C) and "dictu mirabile" (359B).

¹⁸ Metrical translation from the Anglican Breviary. The text comes from the office hymn *Sanctorum meritis*, appointed for "several martyrs." The author quotes the same text again on 359B in a similar context.

¹⁹ *Speculum*, 343B-D: "Quaelibet antiphona charitatem exprimit, sine qua opera quae per psalmos significantur, non prosunt. Quod autem antiphona ante psalmum incepta, post psalmum decantatur integre, significat quod charitas hic initiata post hanc vitam consummabitur aeternaliter, et hoc erit in laetitia inenarrabili. Unde Pneuma subjungitur: quod ineffabile gaudium aeternae vitae indicat. Quod tantum est quod, dum hic praegustatur, nec penitus exprimi nec penitus taceri potest. Unde Ecclesia verbis demissis jubilando cum Pneumate in admirationem prosilit, ac si dicat: Quae vox, quae poterit lingua retexere? Hic enim verba non sufficiunt, nec intellectus, nec tamen amor sinit tacere. Sic itaque Ecclesia pneumatizando expressius quodammodo (mirum loquor) sine verbis quam per verba innuit, quantum sit gaudium coeli, ubi verba cessabunt, cum omnes omnia scient."

Fassler's reading on the *pneuma* here becomes clear in the text's own justification for wordless singing: we do not yet know the indescribable happiness of eternity, so we cannot really express it; at the same time, we do know something of it, so we cannot remain silent. Note as well the way the author uses both of the main words for this phenomenon at once: the Church "jubilates" with the "pneuma." Fassler translates *pneumatizando* as "in making pneumas," which may be formally correct in its meaning, but misses, perhaps, the nuances that this word likely still had in the 12th century before it entered widespread technical use.²⁰ Pneumas, or later, neumes, as the term develops for chant notation, clearly represent for the author a kind of "wonder," and in making them, in "pneumatizing" without words, the Church represents the wonder of celestial, spiritual joy.

The *Speculum*'s second major description of "pneumatization" comes in the chapter on the mass. In terms of 12th century liturgical development, this is actually the more standard place where the *pneuma* would be discussed, for in most places the *pneuma* developed as an addendum to the Alleluia verse at mass (and later, in some places, like at St. Victor, as an expanded sequence). The Alleluia, according to the *Speculum*, "has a *jubilus*," and so "expresses joy and the love of the believers."²¹ The commentary continues:

The Alleluia also signifies the contemplative life, whence it is sung, mystically, in a higher pitch than the Responsory. The Alleluia is repeated again after the Verse; it signifies the eternal joy which the saints receive after this life. Whence the Alleluia is short in word and long in *pneuma*, because that is a greater joy than is possible to explain with speech, to which greater revelation-to-come all languages are brief and imperfect. For who can explain clearly *what has not entered into the heart of man* (1

²⁰ Fassler, *Gothic Song*, 62.

²¹ Ibid., 359A.

Cor. 2:9)? Therefore, because it can neither be thoroughly expressed in words nor in silence, the Church gushes forth in astonishment, as if words have been dismissed for the sake of jubilating. And thus she says, *What tongue may here declare, fancy, or thought descry?*²² For this neither words nor intellect suffice; nor yet does love permit silence. So therefore the Church, in “spiritualizing,” (to use a startling expression), suggests more clearly, and better without words than through words, how great is the joy of God where words shall cease. For through the *pneuma*, although how great eternal joy may be is not described, at least it is shown that the same is indescribable.

And when the sequence follows, the latter Alleluia does not have a *pneuma*, but the choir sings the sequence in its place which signifies the same thing, that is the joy and delights of eternal life. Whence it typically has new and unusual words, since the joy of heaven is hidden and unknown to mortals.²³ And the sequence mystically signifies the praise of eternal life. Whence it is said, *Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, O Lord: they shall praise thee for ever and ever* (Ps. 83:5). It is suited beautifully to this signification that the sequence has praise-flowing words and a sweet-sounding song, because there all will be full of praise and the melody of the celestial organ will abound with sweet-tasting happiness. Because the dwelling there will be *as it were of all rejoicing* (Ps. 86:7). And because the praises of eternal life will not resonate with human words, certain churches “spiritualize” the sequence mystically without words. For no signification of words will be necessary where the hearts of each lie open to each, gazing upon the book of life.²⁴

²² As above, n. 8.

²³ Fassler points to this as a reference to the new sequence repertoire which gives poetic voice to some of these concepts. See *Gothic Song*, 63.

²⁴ *Speculum*, 359A-C, translation mine, but compared with Fassler’s version of part of this selection. “Significat et Alleluia vitam contemplativam, unde mystice in altiori gradu canitur quam Responsorium. Item Alleluia dum post Versum repetitur, significat aeternum gaudium quod post hanc vitam sancti recipiunt. Unde Alleluia modicum est in sermone, et multum in Pneumate, quia gaudium illud majus est, quam sermone possit explicari, ad cuius magnitudinem revelandam omnis lingua modica est et imperfecta. Quis enim plane enarraret, quod in cor hominis non ascendit? (I Cor. II.) Hoc ergo gaudium quia nec penitus verbis exprimi, nec penitus taceri potest, Ecclesia quasi demissis verbis jubilando quasi in admirationem prosilit, ac si dicat: Quae vox, quae poterit lingua retexere, etc. Hic enim verba non sufficiunt nec intellectus, nec tamen amor sinit tacere. Sic ergo Ecclesia pneumatizando, dictu mirabile, expressius quodam modo et melius sine verbis quam per verba innuit quantum sit gaudium Dei ubi verba cessabunt. Per pneuma enim, licet non enarretur quantum sit aeternum gaudium, saltem monstratur ipsum esse inenarrabile. Quando autem Sequentia sequitur, posterius Alleluia non habet Pneuma, sed chorus in loco ejus sequentiam concinit, quae idem significat, id est aeternae vitae gaudium atque delicias. Unde illa nova solet habere verba et inusitata, quia coeli gaudium secretum est et incognitum mortalibus. Vel sequentia aeternae vitae mysticat laudes. Unde dictum est: Beati qui habitant in domo tua, Domine, in saecula saeculorum laudabunt te (Psal. LXXXIII). Huic significationi pulchre convenit quod Sequentia verba habet laudiflua et cantum dulcisonum, quia ibi omnia erunt plena laude, et melodia coelestis organi abundabit dulciflua laetitia. Quia sicut laetantium omnium habitatio erit ibi (Psal. LXXXVI). Et quia laudes aeternae vitae humanis verbis non resonabunt, quaedam Ecclesiae mystice pneumatizant Sequentiam sine verbis.

The Church's *pneumatizatio* is a way of participating, here and now, in the ineffable joys of heaven. It is the highest form of the Church's signs apart from the divinely instituted sacraments, for here the Church somehow, literally, expresses what cannot be expressed. To express what cannot be expressed is possible precisely because she does not express it in ordinary ways, but in the way of signs made wonderful: in the human voice changed, modified to "unusual" words, in music extended unexpectedly beyond the bounds of normal discourse. Through the *pneuma*, the Church's instinct to make signs finds itself a way of "spiritualizing" what is natural through the influx of ecclesial grace made possible in Christ. The *pneuma* does not efficaciously confer grace in a way that the sacraments do, yet it does really and truly participate in the reality it represents. It does not simply point to the life of heaven; it imitates that life and makes it known, albeit in a limited and speculative (as in a mirror) way here on earth. As a result, the human mind and senses are drawn to that reality insofar as they participate in the external sign. They are prepared to be made new, to be re-formed into the humanity that can participate directly in the wordless, intrinsic delights of heaven.

The "wonder" with which the Church "pneumatizes" implies a kind of ecstatic movement outside the normal bounds of human intellect, and the driving force for this movement is love (*amor*). It is worth asking then whether this love operates against the intellect or against rational discourse. "All languages," after all, are brief and imperfect, incapable of describing celestial joy. And yet the sequences are often "full" of "praise-flowing" (*laudiflua*) words along with "sweet-tasting" (*dulcisonum*) song. Despite the

Nulla enim verborum significatio necessaria, ubi corda singulorum patebunt singulis librum vitae intuentibus."

repeated image of a wordless eternity, and the explicit assertion that “no signification of words will be necessary,” it is not clear that the *Speculum* assumes any kind of absolute priority of nonverbal over verbal expression.²⁵ And given what we have seen elsewhere of the author’s endorsement of human reasoning (within set dogmatic limits), it is hard to imagine him claiming here a kind of escape from reason as if the intellect, having grown out of its rational shell, must now grow wings and fly into new terrain.

And so the question of words — which is theoretically equivalent to the potential value of human signs in general — remains on the surface a paradox. On the one hand we have here the ecstatic *pneuma* or *jubilus*, the moment when the joy of celestial bliss enters the earthly liturgy in a profound way, signifying with both its non-discursiveness and its affective effect the Church’s already-but-not-yet participation in what she both knows and does not know. On the other hand we have in the rest of this text the obsessive (from a modern perspective) focus on what and how things mean — that is, on the rational, inevitably discursive (while always imagistic) contemplation of particulars — which pivots precisely on the point of the ultimate intelligibility and communicability of the Church’s signs, even when, and perhaps especially when, those signs are “mysteries.” There appears, then, an impasse, for it is unclear how these two worlds connect; it is unclear how the world of ecclesial signs can have anything to do with the world of freedom from all signs, from the surpassing of the very need for signification.

The gap must be bridged, I would suggest, by attention to one word: necessity. According to our author, signification will no longer be “necessary” in the eschaton. But

²⁵ Fassler points out as much when she speaks of the author’s apparent diffidence as to the value of the new sequence repertoire. See *Gothic Song*, 63.

does necessity say everything there is to say about what comprises heavenly bliss?

Necessity is the province of nature, not grace; even if, like Anselm, we seek “necessary reasons” for the work of redemption, these reasons, surely, amount to a kind of internal logic of creation’s prior grace: *if it is so* that God has made *this* free decision, *this must be so*. If the eschaton is governed by necessity, the tradition seems to take for granted that such necessity is, prior to its own constraints, the work of divine grace. Thus we would be hard pressed to say that the non-necessity of signification in glory necessarily says anything about its possibility or desirability.

Once we put the question in these terms, the *Speculum*’s own tendencies surface again with renewed vigor: the “mystical sweetness” of the Church’s mysteries, the “incomparable felicity” of joining visible and invisible, the unprofitability of trying to separate water from wine. Is it so difficult then to imagine that the heavenly bliss, in the *Speculum*’s vision, might include a kind of glorification of signs, a perfection of the joining between visible and invisible so characteristic of the Church’s mysteries?

III. “Here for medicine, there for delight”

This particular phrase provides a clue as to how the *Speculum* imagines the heavenly city, taken from a text already mentioned above:

Now Christ willed that his flesh be taken up by the faithful so that through this eating of flesh he might invite them to the taste of divinity, and that what we carry here temporally might follow to eternal joys; that here it might be for medicine and there for delight. He willed that both be taken, that our body and our soul alike might be glorified with him.²⁶

²⁶ *Speculum*, 362C.

I have already pointed to this passage as an example of the *Speculum*'s Eucharistic Christology, emphasizing repeatedly the constant unity of Christ's divinity and humanity for the sake of human salvation. But a second look reveals a further conceptual commitment in the comparison between "here" and "there." It is usually taken for granted that the sacraments are fully part of the temporal economy — hence, commonly, they are called "the sacraments *of the Church*" to distinguish "here" from "there." If we come to possess that final communion with God, to participate in the beatific vision, we shall have no need of mediating sacraments to give us the life of grace; we shall have no need of "signification," whether that refers to the sanctifying signs of sacraments or the intelligible signs of Holy Scripture. The vision of God given to the elect in heaven is direct. We shall see "face to face" rather than "in a mirror." How, then, can the *Speculum* assert without explanation that we will eat Christ's flesh in heaven? How can the sacraments, which on earth function as "medicine" remain as "delight" when their temporal role is fulfilled?

A brief return to Augustine may provide some further context. The saint's descriptions of heaven in the *De Civitate Dei* suggest again the Pauline language from 1 Corinthians 13. The "eighth day" is the kind of "sight" impossible in the current age: "There we shall be still and see; we shall see and we shall love; we shall love and we shall praise."²⁷ Elsewhere he compares such spiritual vision to this age's signification with a kind of scorn. In one sermon, for example, he complains of the convoluted (*anfractuosa*) locutions and inquiries we have to make with words.²⁸ In the last day,

²⁷ Augustine, *City of God*, trans. Henry Bettenson (London: Penguin, 2003), XXII.30.

²⁸ Augustine, Sermon 59.3.6 (CCSL XLI:224). "...non quaerentes uerba locutionis anfractuosa, sed bibentes unicum Verbum et inde impleti, ructant laudes et non deficient in laudibus."

however, those who see God, “drinking the singular Word... will burst forth praises and not fail in praises.”²⁹ Because they partake fully in the Word, they will not need words; at the same time, they will not and cannot be silent.

This Augustinian moment is important, for it nuances the easy duality we might pose between unstable, temporal prolixity and firm, aeviternal vision. Human beings are creatures, which is to say temporal in nature. A heavenly vision conceived as *static*, unchanging contemplation loses something of human identity grounded in time; it collapses the distinction between God and creature, which must endure if salvation is to mean something besides annihilation. In the divine court, we can praise. Indeed, Augustine says that we “will not fail” in praise, and I submit that this is more than simply not “dropping the ball” so to speak in our creaturely duty; to “not fail” in praise means precisely that the praise will not “fail” as it inevitably does in this age. While here and now words never quite hit their target, never quite communicate the ineffable, never quite do what we want them to do, in heaven our praise will *work*, in a glorified sense, because we will be fully united with the Son, who never ceases to praise the Father. Our praise becomes efficient, true, and good in a way that it cannot be in the present age, tinged as it is still with the mark of sin and death.

Returning to the *Speculum*’s notion of “delight” in the flesh of Christ with these Augustinian images in mind, it seems to me that the enduring temporal possibilities of praise in heaven present, for our Victorine author, a rich opportunity to imagine how all “signification,” not simply praise, can be transfigured. The sacraments, as temporary medicine for humanity’s voyage to God, will end. But their virtue will remain. We will

²⁹ Ibid.

not take the sacramental Holy Communion in heaven, but we will receive — in some eternally present sense — the Body and Blood of Christ. That is, we will be fully united to him; he will be in us, and we in him, as the water becomes united with the wine at the offertory. While Communion “here” is a temporal means of cleansing us from venial sins and uniting us more fully to Christ and his Church, Communion “there” is the delight and joy of having fully attained union with Christ. In the traditional understanding of the passions, delight is, after all, the soul’s joy at attaining some desired good. It is the consummation of desire. But because the particular good desired in Communion is the infinite Good, that consummation of desire is itself a perpetual movement into the good, not a once-for-all static perfection.

The sacraments, along with the Church’s other signs, endure in eternity in just this sense: they represent not merely the possibility and offer of attaining grace, but the dynamic process of receiving it. We will no longer need signification in heaven to understand the things of God, nor will we need ecclesial signs to receive grace; yet the assumption of the *Speculum*, following orthodox theological tradition’s understanding of the divine nature, is that temporal signification itself is analogical to the process of celestial communication and sight. The word, in heaven, ceases to communicate anything other than what is already directly known. Yet because what is directly known is infinite, the word endures. As Jesus ben Sirach writes, “We could say more but could never say enough” (Ecclus. 43:27, NRS).

Hence, according to the *Speculum*, the *Benedicamus Domino*, sung “in a boyish voice” at the close of the office, signifies that

... all our praise is youthful in comparison to the God whom we praise, and that whatever is able to be said here is less than the praise of God. But if the Church says, *Let us praise*, in fact we do not suffice in praising, because the superior things of God surpass our eloquence and our intellect, because *Man shall come to a deep heart, and God shall be exalted* (Ps. 63:7-8). Whence from everything consequently is said, *Thanks be to God*, because it is pleasing, as it is a pious thing, to be surpassed in the praise of God.³⁰

The limitations of creaturely intellect and discourse do not stop the Church from her work. Working through these limitations, uncovering the mysterious sweetness of signification, is her work. After all, it is “meet and right” to give thanks to God, even though by definition we can never thank God enough for the infinite worth of his gifts, both in creation and redemption.

The ineffable joy of the heavenly *pneuma* is described in the commentary on compline as the “reward of our labor” — here, literally at the end of the day, allegorically, at the end of this age.³¹ The constant work of the Church’s mysteries gives way, at the last day, to a restful peace:

For the Church here fights, in the homeland she reigns: part sojourns, and part glories. That which sojourns sighs from the desert and exile, ascending to the homeland, over the waters of Babylon to the supernal Jerusalem, which being always at peace, makes its continual feast. Blessed city, Jerusalem is called, vision of peace. *How glorious the kingdom*;³² *glorious things are said of thee, city of God* (Psalm 86:3).³³

Fighting and movement characterize the current economy, where the Church must strain with effort to purify her members and prepare them for the wedding feast of the Lamb.

³⁰ *Speculum*, 343D. “Quod autem in fine voce puerili dicitur: Benedicamus Domino, significat quod omnis laus nostra puerilis est ad comparationem Dei quem laudamus, et quod quidquid hic dici potest minus est a laude Dei. Ac si dicat Ecclesia: Laudamus, sed laudando non sufficimus, quia supereminencia Dei eloquium nostrum superat et intellectum, quia accedet homo ad cor altum, et exaltabitur Deus (Psal. LXIII). Unde ab omnibus consequenter Deo gratias dicitur, quia placet, ut pium est, in laude Dei superari.”

³¹ *Ibid.*, 345C.

³² From the Magnificat antiphon for second vespers of All Saints.

³³ *Speculum*, 338B.

Part of this economy as well is the difficulty of signification, the possibility of losing things in translation, of mistaking intentions, of understanding signs in an incomplete or even misleading way. Finding the “interior nectar” of ecclesial mysteries takes practice and painstaking focus; it is not for the faint of heart, but rather for those willing to traverse the desert in exile, enduring sighs felt by the waters of Babylon where “we sat and wept” (Ps. 136 Vulg.).

All of this sighing and waiting and exercising remains crucial, though, for the unfolding of sacred history. It is through this temporal activity that “the present Church prepares herself” for the wedding feast where the king will be “seen face to face”:

And all the saints, celebrating continually the day of great festivity which the Lord has made, do not cease to praise, in nuptial songs, the immortal spouse, beautiful in form before the sons of men, who has elected the Church in his gracious mercy. Concerning which, as he had foreseen from eternity, he said: *I will go unto the mountain of myrrh, and to the hills of Libanus, and my spouse shall speak to me.*³⁴

The prominence of the Song of Songs throughout the *Speculum*, and, in the above case, liturgical material related to it, may strike readers as par for the course in a 12th century text more closely aligned with affective piety than with scholarly theology. But I submit that the Song’s nuptial imagery plays a key role in the *Speculum*’s vision, not merely because it invokes a wide range of affective notes, but because the Song is fundamentally about the delights of requited, consummated love, whether conjugal or spiritual. The Song contains passages of desire and absence, of course, but its main focus remains the

³⁴ *Speculum*, 338C-D. The final quotation is labeled in Migne as being from Cant. 4, but a survey of the chant repertoire in Cantus suggests this is actually from an antiphon that riffs on Cant. 4:6 and 2:10, used for the Nativity of the BVM and Assumption. “Omnesque sancti diem magnae festivitatis quam fecit Dominus continue celebrantes, in epithalamiis laudare non cessant Sponsum immortalem, speciosum forma prae filiis hominum, qui Ecclesiam sibi gratuita elegit clementia. De qua, ut ab aeterno praeviderat, ait: Ibo ad montem myrrhae et ad colles Libani, et loquar sponsae meae (Cant. IV).”

delight of presence, of possession. Its rich spiritual allegory, so often explored over the centuries, as well as its literal content, suggests in very strong terms the enduring temporality, novelty, and unfolding goodness of nuptial love. That is, the love “stronger than death” that cannot be quenched by “many waters,” is these things precisely in its undying continuity from moment to moment; it is no static thing like a marriage certificate sitting in a desk drawer, but something known, seen, and experienced in time and from the perspective of human createdness. In a similar way, the ever-new aspects of love unfold themselves over time, not because love is different, or because love changes, but because love centers on that central mystery of human existence, the *person* — the hypostasis or subsistence at the center of the Incarnational mystery that is able to connect the temporal with the eternal. In time (or perhaps we should say, even in the human experience of temporality, which must remain even in the eternity of the eighth day) the mystery of personal self-giving and receiving is a kind of creaturely infinity to the extent that the mystery of person cannot be exhausted by discursive knowledge.

The nuptial imagery of the *Speculum*, then, suggests a particular quality to life in the heavenly Jerusalem, namely, the endurance, surpassing all formal necessity, of various forms — even if we dare not say exactly what they are, except that they are presently ineffable — of *significance*. And this endurance stands as the central conceptual link between the Church’s life here and there, between the present age and the age to come.

IV. The temporal's marriage to the eternal

At this point we might ask whether this theoretical description of heaven has anything to do with earth. Indeed it does, for, if the celestial beatitude retains creaturely delight transposed to eternal an eternal modality, the “medicine” of the Church’s sacramental economy takes on even deeper meaning than it already has. More than a mechanical system for dispensing grace, the Church’s ability to “mysticate” reality — to give it spiritual significance — becomes itself a kind of organic force for reforming the individual and ecclesial self. The use of the temporal to bring us into conversation with the eternal is practice for eternity, because eternity with God consists of just this felicitous conjunction made permanent and fruitful.

What stands behind the *Speculum*’s theology of the sign, therefore, is much more than a general 12th-century renaissance conviction that the created world makes sense and can be investigated with the mind. That conviction is present, of course, and deeply embedded in the text. But with it stands a kind of intuition that the means with which the Church accomplishes such investigation is itself worthy of celebration and joy. It is wonderful that the truth can be found; it is still more wonderful that it can be found through delightful means. The *Speculum* teaches us to take delight in *things*, whether pure *res* or *res et signum* or *signum tantum*, not because such things are worthy to be enjoyed for their own sake, but because all such things can be used for the enjoyment of God.

Paying close attention to things might, of course, distract us from the Good who alone is worthy to be loved. Such is, no doubt, the warning of many a preacher through the centuries, heard most keenly in the reform tradition of early modernity and carried on

today by occasional evangelical denouncement of the “gaudy baubles of sacramentalism.”³⁵ Though it is hard to imagine any 12th century theologian taking quite so dim a view, the basic warning comes through in various (especially monastic) warnings against *curiositas*, which could be applied as well to investigation of ecclesial mysteries as to theological conundrums. Still, the *Speculum* spends very little (if any) energy on such worries; it takes for granted that we need to spend more time thinking about the Church’s signs, not less. The *Speculum* implicitly calls the bluff, so to speak, on any attempt to ignore the Church’s life for the sake of some supposedly higher and more direct knowledge of God. Indeed, direct knowledge is possible in “the vision of eternal life” where “we shall see God face to face,” but here God is contemplated “in an enigma.”³⁶ The enigma, then, needs to be considered, for it is only through this limited form of investigation that our bodies and souls will be made ready for the full sight of heaven. As Rowan Williams writes on Augustine’s *De Doctrina*,

To look to the cross, then, and to ‘sign’ ourselves with it, is to accept the same limits, and thus to live in hope—and, Augustine adds, oddly at first sight, to have proper reverence for the sacraments; not so odd if we see this as a further illustration of the need to see the symbolic life of the Church itself as pointing beyond itself, rather than providing a ground for spiritual complacency and stasis...³⁷

So too, in the *Speculum*, the focus on the whole of the Church’s signifying signs may seem odd if we look first at the idea of an eschatological freedom from mediating signification and temporal medicine. If, however, we see the Church’s signs as not just

³⁵ This particularly choice phrase comes, I believe, from the sometime (Anglican) Dean of Sydney, Phillip Jensen. I have been unable to locate a print source to confirm the reference, though the description certainly represents an extreme version of Protestant caution towards the Church’s mysteries.

³⁶ *Speculum*, 362B.

³⁷ Rowan Williams, “Language, Reality and Desire in Augustine’s *De Doctrina*” (*Journal of Literature and Theology* 3:2 [July 1989]), 144.

signs of individual temporal things but also of the very modality of creaturely participation in the real beyond the self, we can have a proper reverence for them and “use” them to prepare us for the transformed significance of the heavenly vision.

According to the *Speculum* author, joy (in this case of the Nativity) “is recognized, preached spiritually, and demonstrated celestially from temporal things.”³⁸ This is in fact the normal order of things. We cannot simply assert the spiritual behind the temporal and be done with it. The two sides are linked, and remain so, even after an individual gains deeper spiritual insight. The *Speculum* hopes that this spiritual insight will teach us not to despise temporal things as obstacles to the spiritual, but rather to appreciate them and even take delight in their ability to bring us closer to what is unseen.

Still, even this emphasis on the value of the temporal can risk neglecting the actual teaching of our text. I have argued above that the *Speculum* sees the Church as a kind of nexus between the visible and the invisible. It would be a mistake, therefore, to think of the Church as primarily a temporal reality designed to bring us into contact with the eternal, for the Church represents not the temporal as such but the divinely instituted union of heaven and earth inaugurated by the Incarnation. The Church, as we read in the opening lines of the book, is “constructed in the heavens from living stones.”³⁹ The temporal construction of the Church echoes a spiritual construction of the Church in heaven. Likewise, the temporal dedication of the Church suggests the spiritual dedication of the Church: “The great devotion and love with which Christ adorns his bride for himself and prepares [her] for the heavenly dedication is signified in part through the

³⁸ *Speculum*, 348C: “Tantum enim gaudium eo tempore spiritualiter praedicandum et coelitus demonstrandum agnoscitur.”

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 335B.

temporal dedication of the Church.”⁴⁰ The conventional reading of the Church building suggests a temporal and material allegory of something spiritual; such a reading works here on a surface level, but it misses the crucial point that the Church is “dedicated” even in heaven, which is to say, set apart, consecrated, made significant. The invisible significance of the Church is not something other than the Church — in heaven the Church is still the Church. She is made perfect and clothed in glory for the wedding feast, but she remains herself, in a kind of personal continuity analogous to the continuity of the individual elect after the general resurrection.

Hence the Church is significant as Church not only in a temporal and visible way but also in an eternal and invisible way. That is, something spiritual and invisible can also be a sign — *res et sacramentum*. Just as we must in some sense retain the virtue of the sacramental eating in heaven, so we must retain the virtue of the sacramental Church. “Here for medicine, there for delight” applies as much to the social Body and its practices as it does to the sacramental Body. We must learn to recognize the spiritual realities of the Church now so that in heaven we may recognize the ways that the temporal has been caught up into the eternal. Spiritual vision here leads, oddly, to a kind of glorified temporal vision in eternity. Such a recognition constitutes the final step of maturity in the central “mirror” metaphor of the *Speculum*. To see God in glory does not mean, of course, eternally repeating the sensory rituals constituting the medieval liturgy. Yet it does, surely, mean recognizing “face to face” exactly what we have already seen in the mirror. It means the ability to delight in salvation history even when history is no more. It means the joy of seeing what has already been seen in a new way, the pleasure of seeing

⁴⁰ Ibid., 338D.

the final perfection of all signs, of seeing signs full of their meaning and not “interrupted” like those on earth. And it means finally the jubilation (whether comprising actual physical sound or not) at the possession of all these goods, singing celestial *pneuma* that never ends.

CONCLUSION

Several aspects from the foregoing treatment of the *Speculum* deserve some final comments. Beyond the simple historical questions — what is this text about? how does it work? what is its theological content? — lie some interesting modern implications and challenges as to theological method, as well as liturgical and pastoral theology. Surely the task of historical theology assumes an enduring relevance for all such theological writing, however obscure it may seem in the present age. Furthermore, the *Speculum*'s unique contribution to 12th century Victorine theology warrants a brief consideration, at least, of how it might fit into the larger Victorine and medieval theological trajectory. Before turning to these thorny paths, though, it will be useful to summarize, in five points, some of the key findings on the *Speculum* and its theology.

First, the *Speculum* sees theology, as well as the Christian life, its liturgies, signs, symbols, and ethics, as grounded in the principle of “joining.” This theoretical priority is not, to be sure, explicitly laid out in systematic terms, but it surfaces again and again in reference to the Incarnation, to the Church's sacraments, to the Church's identity in the world, and to the Church's final vocation in the heavenly Jerusalem. On a literal level, too, the *Speculum*'s symbolic and signifying world relies on the ability to constantly combine different ideas under single signs, to join multiple signs to the same meaning, to unite the visible and material with the invisible and spiritual. Moreover, the principle of joining, or *conjunctio*, inevitably connotes the nuptial imagery of the Song of Songs. The ultimate significance of this claim can be found, arguably, in comparison with that other key term of medieval theology, *ratio*. *Ratio*, of course, is a term complicated by its deeply varied usage: it can be reason itself, the abstract human intellectual power; it can

be a reason or rationale for something; it can be a cause or a justification; it can be an explanation. At its core, though, I suggest that *ratio* always involves some form of separation or division. This could comprise, at its most basic, the abstract separation of cause from effect. In describing doctrinal philosophy, for example, Isidore of Seville notes that an abstract quantity is “which we treat with pure reason, separating it by the intellect from matter or from other accidental qualities – as are even and odd – or from things of this kind.”¹ To make this distinction (a rational distinction) is not to say that by emphasizing *conjunctio* the *Speculum* stands opposed to all reasoning. To the contrary, it is firmly committed to rational investigation of the Church’s mysteries, from her sacraments to her dogmatic theology. At the same time, all of this rationalizing — which we might describe metaphorically as taking something apart — is meant to help us understand better so that we can put things back together. And the reverse can be true as well: sometimes we put things together so that we can better understand how they operate separately. As a result, it could be argued that the *Speculum* presents a more nimble, even playful, approach to theology than what we typically think of as characteristic of the 12th and 13th centuries. (Nor can it be characterized as a work of devotional affective piety opposed to more “academic” forms of theology.) It is less concerned with getting a set of final, completely correct answers, than it is with forming the intellect and the heart by exercise so that they can better appreciate the answers when, by the grace of God, they are found.

Second, the *Speculum* resists any form of sacramental theology that places clear boundaries between the gracious economy of the dominical sacraments (sacraments

¹ Isidore, *Etymologies*, II.xxvi.14.

properly-so-called) and the Church's general economy of signs. That is, making distinctions is possible, and proper — surely the author would not contest a description of the Eucharist as the *sanctissimum sacramentum* — so long as we understand that the same Christological foundation of the sacraments likewise gives a kind of universal power to the Church to make meaning in the world, to “preach the gospel to all creation” (Mk. 16:15). We should rightly reverence the sacraments, but we should see in the sacraments the power of Christ to sacramentalize all temporal things, to make ordinary things wonderful. This signifying, transformative power flows from Christ, through the sacraments, out into the whole Church, who is most fully herself not just when she celebrates the Eucharist, but when she shows the world the sweetness of signs, when she shows the world how history is not just history but the history of salvation, how things are not just things but signs of greater things.

Third, a vision of heaven wherein human-ecclesial signs remain desirable (if not necessary) has profound implications for the value of such signs here on earth. The inherent goodness, the “interior nectar” of the Church's mysteries, consists of precisely this eschatological connection. They are “here for medicine,” but “there for delight.” The *Speculum* rejects a view of the kingdom of heaven as a kind of static, wordless perfection. Perfection, rather, includes the infinite joy of the knowledge of God characterized by the ecstatic *pneuma* of the earthly liturgy. The *pneuma* represents the transfiguration of human signification in its non-discursiveness, but it does so no less fully than the creative sequence repertoire using new and strange words. The gap between signs and their meanings in the present age is itself a kind of preparation for the infinite

gap between creature and Creator (between the purest *signum* and *res*) that will be experienced in the age to come.

Fourth, the Church, her liturgy, and her theology, are all aspects to the same fundamental mystery which is the temporal Body of Christ. All theology is liturgical, for the Church exists liturgically, and theology is simply the formal vocabulary of the worshipping Church. This is, perhaps, a further theoretical consequence to the principle of *conjunctio*. The *Speculum* is hardly opposed to formal theology or philosophy; indeed, the author states in the prologue that he considers himself more of a logician than a theologian. At the same time, the book itself shows a remarkable fluidity between normally distinct disciplines: scriptural *lectio*, sacramental theology and philosophy, ritual commentary, architecture, sartorial aesthetics, music theory, moral theology and anthropology, the theory of reading, and Trinitarian contemplation. If all of these things are “mysteries of the Church,” it seems clear that the Church, in this view, is more than one (if important) aspect of Christian teaching, but the active temporal center of God’s activity in the world.

Fifth, to explain the “mysteries”, then, involves less a “liturgical commentary” approach, as it has been typically understood in historical scholarship, than it does a comprehensive catechesis on all the external signs of the Christian life. To take a tour of the Church’s ceremonies, or to survey her vestments and her office chants, is not less part of Christian formation than is teaching what books comprise the Old and New Testaments and how to properly read them. Meditating on the role of the tract at mass is, to put it bluntly, of no less importance than meditating on the threeness of the one God, and we miss the point of the Church’s signs if we think that we should simply move

beyond them to bigger and better things. In other words, what makes us think that we will understand the three-in-one divine nature through pure philosophy better than we will understand it through the images and historical connections of the Church's ritual life? Was not the prime revelation of God found in the Incarnation of the Son? Or, on the other hand, do we dare neglect the conceptual, discursive gifts of the scriptures and the creeds for the sake of some pious affective fantasy? This is, again, putting it in stark terms, but to love and know God requires, in the *Speculum's* view, a totalizing entrance into the meaningfulness of Church life. Nothing is idle in the Church's pilgrimage to her bridegroom, or in the bridegroom's pursuit of her.

A Victorine moment

As discussed in the second chapter above, the *Speculum* models a particularly Victorine approach to theology in its attention to the literal, care for detail, and holistic sense of theology's true end: the reformation and salvation of souls. As such, it also represents an important corrective to modern scholarship's frequent "compartmentalization of themes," which, Rachel Fulton Brown points out, leaves us with the impression that the "rational, systematic, masculine, elite" is on one side while the "affective, imagistic, feminine, popular" is on the other. The *Speculum* is a useful example of Brown's contention that the authors of the 12th century simply did not think in these terms, and that, for them, "Mystery and proximity, complexity and immediacy were not, as they have apparently become for many modern Christians, irreconcilable

opposites but rather the very definition of the divine.”² The traditional duties of a Parisian master were decidedly on one side of this invisible divide, including, according to Peter Cantor, *lectio*, *disputatio*, and *predicatio*.³ But even in the 13th century, the Franciscan master Richard Rufus adds to these *iubilatio*, listing it before the other three.⁴ If the *Speculum* could be said to represent a kind of theological *iubilatio*, it is perhaps more centrally characteristic of its age, and not just the Victorine school, than scholars have been accustomed to acknowledge.

But there is more to be said about the *Speculum*’s Victorine context than these general thematic notes. As we have seen, the work takes many themes from Hugh. Looking forward, it is possible as well to see the *Speculum* as a further development of Victorine theology in the direction of the last major Victorine, Thomas Gallus of the 13th century. Boyd Taylor Coolman’s recent work on Gallus has uncovered the striking ways that this Victorine theologian, influenced by his strong engagement with the Dionysian corpus, further develops some of these Victorine themes on the unity of love and knowledge. According to Coolman, Gallus’ mystical theology “is not rightly seen as an ascent paradigm, nor even as a mystical itinerary. It is not about leaving the lower for the higher, nor abandoning the natural for the supernatural, nor “kicking away the ladder” of lower, created things, including the self, as one passes over and out of this world.”

² Rachel Fulton Brown, “Three-in-One: Making God in Twelfth-Century Liturgy, Theology, and Devotion” in *European Transformations: The Long Twelfth Century*, Ed. Thomas F.X. Noble and John Van Engen (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012), 469.

³ Petrus Cantor Parisiensis, *Verbum abbreviatum*, I, 1 (ed. M. Boutry, CCCM 196, 9; PL 205:23): “In tribus consistit exercitium sacre Scripture: in lectione, disputatione, predicatione.”

⁴ Richardus Rufus, *Notulae super primum librum Sententiarum*, prol.: “Dividitur autem hic universus labor in quattuor partes, quasi quattuor quadrantes, scilicet in iubilationem, lectionem, praedicationem, quaestionem.” I am grateful to Stephen Brown for providing me with this citation, which comes from his own edition of Richard’s inaugural sermon at Paris.

Rather, “expressing a Victorine intuition going back to Hugh of St. Victor, Gallus’ mystical spiral ultimately enables the soul to be an eternally dynamic abode of the Trinitarian presence, continually *filled with the all-fullness of God*.”⁵

While the *Speculum* lacks Gallus’ specific engagement with the Dionysian corpus, it expresses, in a remarkably similar way, the same basic pattern for the final Christian perfection. Without the same level of precision and nuance, perhaps, the *Speculum* nonetheless argues, in its own nuptial imagery, for the continued creaturely movement within the final embrace of the divine nature. One can easily imagine its endorsement of what Coolman labels in Gallus as “a sense of continual and eternal progress,” of *nova* “continually flowing down into the hierarchized soul from the super-abundant Spouse.”⁶ The idea that hierarchy “is simply what one is,” that ascent and descent are intrinsic aspects of theological anthropology, has profound resonances within the *Speculum*’s theology of signs, even without the Dionysian terms.⁷ For like Gallus, the *Speculum* is keen to show that the Church’s mysteries are not simply a ladder to be climbed and then discarded; they are, rather, intrinsic aspects of divinized human identity; they are “what one is,” and so the signifying economy of the Church, even as it becomes ever purer and more perfect in the life of heaven, remains, not just as the temporary medicine for reformation, but for the spiritual delight of eternal bliss.

A medieval theology of différance?

⁵ Boyd Taylor Coolman, *Knowledge, Love, and Ecstasy in the Theology of Thomas Gallus* (Oxford, 2017), 256-7.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 256.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 25.

To say, as I do above, that the *Speculum* engages in a “play” of signification, recalls us, perhaps uncomfortably, to the 20th century’s various poststructuralist theoretical engagements, especially those of Jacques Derrida’s deconstructionism. The resonance remains, though, even without the term “play,” for the *Speculum*’s broad interest in ecclesial signification strikes many chords with postmodern theory’s own obsessions on the role of signs. Derrida’s theory of *différance*, the extended and indefinite deferral of meaning (i.e. the signified) through different layers of signification, deals directly with the medieval inheritance and its implicit metaphysics. At several moments he even points to the liturgical *pneuma*, as idealized by Rousseau looking back on the middle ages, as a characteristic moment of western self-delusion. But, according to Bruce Holsinger’s reading, “As Derrida recognizes, the doxological inspiritings of liturgical language must always participate in (are a particularly forceful instantiation of) the same metaphysics of presence undergirding the self-comprehension of the Western tradition.”⁸ In his essay, Holsinger is trying to defend Derrida, in a sense, from his villainization at the hand of Catherine Pickstock and the Radical Orthodoxy school; Derrida recognizes, in other words, in the medieval liturgical context, exactly the kind of metaphysical presence tied to language that Pickstock thinks he ignores.⁹

⁸ Bruce Holsinger, *The Premodern Condition: Medievalism and the Making of Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 151.

⁹ See Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998). I count myself an admirer of Pickstock’s work, though Holsinger’s criticism of her reading of Derrida is trenchant and convincing. Whether or not she adequately accounts for the true “villain” in modernity, or accurately describes the details of the medieval Roman Rite, her general description of the pre-modern, doxological understanding of language, deserves serious consideration. For another helpful (and at moments quite sharp) critique of Pickstock, see David Bentley Hart’s review essay in *Pro Ecclesia* 9.3 (2000): 367-372.

Here is not the place for an extended discussion of Derrida.¹⁰ All the same, the postmodern disillusionment with the ontological status of signs has clear links with the conceptual world of the *Speculum*. That is to say: the recognition of a kind of “deferral” of the signified is hardly a new idea in the 20th century, even if medieval thinkers would take for granted the metaphysics of signification as something actually touching the real. That is, without Derrida’s postmodern cynicism, it was possible to acknowledge the difficulty and slipperiness of human forms of speech and writing. One might argue, with some key caveats, that the *Speculum* is full of just this kind of deconstructive *différance*. After all, ecclesial signs routinely “signify” things in ways that can only be justified by an appeal to the instability and openness of the sign. For the *Speculum*, signifiers can be broken from their conventional signifieds and reunited with all manner of new things. This is less the case, admittedly, with the sacraments proper, but with other ecclesial signs, such as the minutiae of ritual and ceremony, the *Speculum* is actually much closer to a deconstructive reading than to many early modern “explanations” in which one thing is rigorously (and at times, awkwardly) tied to one other thing with no apparent awareness of absent similitude or the contradictions between the asserted meanings and the actual content of ritual words. This is what I mean by “play” in this case: the Church is able to take delight in these possibilities and investigations precisely because the signs are so fruitful, because in union with the two-natured Christ, the Church can make the ordinary wonderful. The openness of signs is actually a gift that benefits the human

¹⁰ Whom Hart’s review describes, in Hart fashion, as “the most overrated philosopher of recent decades,” involved in a tedious and “banal inversion of Hegelian logic” (370). It also goes without saying that my invocation of Derridean terminology paints in broad strokes without detailed engagement with his books. On the concept of *différance*, etc., see especially *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).

imagination and enables the faithful to enter the mysteries of redemption with the whole self.

Also, if the kind of infinite deferral of the signified, in Derrida's understanding, longs for (and never finds) a final reality that is itself not a sign but a *res tantum* — that is, a metaphysics of divine presence undergirding the meaningfulness of all language — then the *Speculum*'s own theology of the sign shows a medieval consideration of that chain of signification. For Derrida, all signs, bereft of any real metaphysical grounding, become purely external and self-referential. For the *Speculum*, as I have argued, the gap between signifier and signified leads not to the kind of anarchic nihilism of what Alastair MacIntyre labels the “genealogy” tradition (“Truths are illusions which we have forgotten are illusions...”) ¹¹, but rather, allegorically, to the infinite gap between humanity and God experienced in the endless day of the heavenly banquet. The play of signs here on earth, in the end, can be seen as analogical to the play of creaturely delight in heaven, just as the gap between signs and their signified suggests the gap between creatures and their creator. The *Speculum*, in its unique Victorine manner, offers a kind of prophetic answer to one of postmodernity's preoccupying anxieties.

Re-symbolizing the Church

Whatever a 12th century French liturgical theology might say to a 20th century French theorist, the crisis of “meaning,” if we can venture a description, remains for us with or without theory. My teenage students will likely never read Derrida, but they live in a world of purely external signification, where signifiers point endlessly to other

¹¹ Alasdair MacIntyre quoting Nietzsche in *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame, 1990), 35.

signifiers, including human identity itself. One recalls the great Victorian poet Hopkins, lamenting the loss of significance brought in by modern industrial culture:

Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.¹²

The foot unable to experience the earth might stand as a sign of our more general state of aesthetic and communicative experience. Our feet are shod; we cannot feel the soil. We cannot see what lies beneath the surface of things, what things signify, or *that* they signify anything beyond other signs, for all is “seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil,” which is to say smeared by the tyranny of social media and prison-industrial politics, by the anti-intellectual, anti-agrarian, anti-ecclesial egotism that pervades our experience of the western world in this 21st century.

It is hardly nostalgic, I hope, to remember that, until not very long ago, the mainstream western tradition assumed that beauty, truth, and goodness, having their unity in the simplicity of the divine nature, should ultimately lead to one another. And much of our history has been marked by the assumption that if we surround ourselves in beauty, if we make beauty and produce beautiful things that inspire us to higher things, we will be led to higher things in truth. It is hard not to see such an assumption at play, on some level, in so many medieval commentators on the Church’s exterior, aesthetic signs. The *Speculum*, for instance, hardly assumes that priestly vestments will somehow automatically make a priest good, but it does assume, without really any argumentation, that the beauty of vestments is actually ordered to the beauty of holy living. To live a

¹² Gerard Manley Hopkins, “God’s Grandeur,” available widely in the public domain, quoted from *Poems and Prose* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 14.

holy life as a priest, then, to join the external sign with the internal virtue, is to effect the joining of realities that are already, ontologically and experientially, linked together. Finding this continued assumption today (naïve as it may now seem) is easy enough. For example, traditionalist commentators, lay and ordained, especially those discontented by the various reforms of the 1970s, routinely assert, almost as an axiomatic principle, that the aesthetic degradation of the liturgy in the last fifty years is the reason the western Church is in decline.

Yet part of the crisis of cultural meaning in the 20th century is precisely the shattering of that ideal link between the beautiful and the good. And this shattering has little to do with the subcultures of academic theory. As George Steiner points out, many an officer in the Nazi death camps spent his mornings listening to Bach and reading Goethe.¹³ For a long time I have been haunted by this image from Steiner, as I think we all ought to be. Some of the same men were, likely, aficionados of the kind of high solemn mass that would have been recognizable by a Christian of the 12th century. But, for Steiner, this severed cord between beauty and goodness is part of a larger cultural trajectory in which the great works of art and literature have become unintelligible to us:

Already a dominant proportion of poetry, of religious thought, of art, has receded from personal immediacy into the keeping of the specialist.... Never has there been a more hectic prodigality of specialized erudition—in literary studies, in musicology, in art history, in criticism, and in that most Byzantine of genres, the criticism and theory of criticism. Never have the metalanguages of the custodians flourished more, or with more arrogant jargon, around the silence of live meaning.¹⁴

¹³ George Steiner, *In Bluebeard's Castle: Some Notes Towards the Redefinition of Culture* (New Haven: Yale, 1971), 77-78.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 105-106.

We cannot read anything anymore without footnotes, without annotations. Steiner marvels at an annotated edition of Keats that has to explain that Venus is “a pagan goddess of love.” That was 1970. Now I would have to annotate the annotation, because my students do not know what the phrase “pagan goddess” means.

Nor do they have any idea what the liturgy means, despite the Church’s keen contemporary interest, at least among a certain generation of leadership, in making liturgy “meaningful.” One does not need a background in French theory to see the hopelessness of an intrinsically “meaningful” liturgy in a culture so far removed from that of the liturgy’s historical roots. Part of the quest for meaningfulness, in fact, comes from modernity’s disillusionment with meaning. As Pope Benedict XVI writes on the desire for “creative” pastoral liturgy, “Creativity means that in a universe that in itself is meaningless and came into existence through blind evolution, man can creatively fashion a new and better world.”¹⁵ But is the solution, then, to stick with the tradition and at the same time pile on the liturgy with explanations, to annotate and footnote, to provide extensive bulletins and service books, to attempt summarizing the entire western philosophical tradition in the pregnant pastoral pause before we ask the faithful to affirm that the Son is *homoousias* with the Father?

At this point my apparent digression into despair must find its way home. Should we acknowledge that the *Speculum*, or the commentary genre that it loosely represents, qualifies as the “numbing drone” of the secondary, the “narcotic” standing in the way of real presence?¹⁶ Surely it is “secondary,” in one way, as a commentary on something else,

¹⁵ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, trans. John Saward (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2000), 168.

¹⁶ George Steiner, *Real Presences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 49.

even if it lacks the deep cynicism of postmodernity's view of signification's metaphysical ground. But I am not content to see it as an example of the endlessly deferred mediation of real presence. Its secondarity, I would argue, makes for itself a kind of primacy. It is not fundamentally about "what things mean," as if it were a *commentaire composé* written for an "instructed Eucharist" at the Abbey. It is about the fact that things mean. It is about *presence*. It is oriented to the assumption that, by following its example and immersing oneself in the delights of the Church's signifying economy, its readers may actually come to know and love God.

The question is whether this text can actually help us in our malaise of meaninglessness, liturgical and otherwise. For, as we have well observed above, the text itself (perhaps more even than Keats) requires annotation, else the present dissertation would be an exercise in straightforward translation rather than historical theology. The *Speculum*'s secondarity works, in its context, largely because its "primary" material is so rich — not only the communal life at St. Victor, but the general atmosphere of 12th century ecclesial culture. Nostalgic imitation or longing for that culture will only get us so far. What is needed is a complete symbolization of the Church for the sake of the symbolization of the world. The Church must "signify" to show the world that creation itself can be "significant" in the economy of God. That is, in a nutshell, the *Speculum*'s understanding of the Church's vocation, as well as that of her individual members. As to how the Church and her members can pursue such sacred work, I suggest three main lessons to glean from the *Speculum*.

First, Christian teaching on eschatology matters. The *Speculum* shows that what is at stake in the Church's teaching on heaven is precisely the meaningfulness of her signs

on earth. If everything in the current economy will pass a way, it becomes difficult to see any real continuity between the Church as the “ark of salvation” and the beatitude promised to the saints. The Church then becomes a completely external signifier pointing to merely other external signifiers. The modern chain of meaninglessness remains. Unfortunately, much Christian speech about heaven (including, at times, the use of “heaven” as opposed to the revealed imagery of a new earth as the final dwelling place of the heavenly city), often influenced by popular images of angels floating in clouds as much as by the language of the “beatific vision,” implies a kind of static closure to actual human experience. It is not just that this talk is unappealing (for how can we expect the good to appeal to those catechized by the culture of death?); it is that it misses crucial aspects of Christian tradition that have import on the significance of this life. It is, frankly, difficult to understand why we should care about this world if, in the end of the day, it must be completely escaped.¹⁷ If, rather than stasis, eternal life is a kind of unfolding and developing creaturely delight in creation-turned-wonderful, ordinary life can be conceived of as more than a mere “vale of tears” on the way to something better, but as a vale of tears waiting to be converted into a city of joy.

Second, details matter. While the prevailing vice of modernity may have been a kind of *curiositas*, I wonder if this century has entered a new phase of its vicious opposite, the desire for and delight in ignorance (for which, as far as I know, there is no simple word). No doubt this comes, at least in part, from the sheer necessity of ignorance concerning so many of the things that make modern life possible (the mechanics of a

¹⁷ Indeed, there is a kind of anti-world gnostic escapism that seems to support, simultaneously, Christian sectarianism and pagan hedonism.

dishwasher or a sewer system; the guts of the internet; the precise supply chain of chia seeds). We are so accustomed to ignorance about so many things that the desire to know about things that we do not understand has often left us. The *Speculum*'s instruction, following Hugh, to learn everything, to pay attention to each detail, may appear as an overwhelming impossibility. And yet what the *Speculum* commends is not, in fact, comprehensive knowledge of detail, but rather comprehensive openness to detail, and a comprehensive desire to know what needs to be known for the sake of the good — studiousness, in other words. As Paul Griffiths explains,

The curious inhabit a world of objects, which can be sequestered and possessed; the studious inhabit a world of gifts, given things, which can be known by participation, but which, because of their very natures, can never be possessed.¹⁸

The contemporary fluctuation between curiosity and self-imposed ignorance relies on a certain conception of how the world is. As Griffiths suggests, the things of the world can never be truly and finally possessed and comprehended: such possession is alone possible with the Creator. Hence, as the *Speculum* teaches, we practice working studiously with temporal things — knowing that they cannot be owned or possessed or nailed down in any absolute sense — so that we can finally be prepared to fully participate in God. The Church's task, then, is not to know everything, but to treat all the things of this world as ultimately knowable, and ultimately meaningful, in God.

But attention to detail stretches beyond the terms of intellectual desire. Following its Victorine influences, the *Speculum* situates ecclesial existence not just as a matter of Church ritual and teaching, but as the whole fabric of human life in community.

¹⁸ Paul Griffiths, *Intellectual Appetite: A Theological Grammar* (Washington: Catholic University Press, 2009), 22.

Concomitant with the *Speculum*'s focus on the meaningfulness of all things, then, is a unified approach to knowledge and act in the Church. We can consider virtuous living, Trinitarian theology, and the rules for chanting antiphons as separate questions with their own disciplinary modes of thought. At the same time, separating such spheres to the point of isolation impedes ecclesial witness, as in the scandalous appearance of an immoral priest, or a holy ascetic with Arian views, or a dishonest heretic with impeccable ritual sense. Such extremes should remind us of the smaller ways that we compartmentalize our call to be members of the one Body, rendering not just that Body unintelligible, but also the world whose meaningfulness it is called to unveil.

Third, and related to the previous, ritual, ceremony, rubric — in short, the whole world of signification under the broad heading “liturgy” — are not window-dressing to the Church's true identity, but essentially related to her task in the world. Thus the Church's priority is not first to explain the liturgy, but to do it. Robert Jenson is illuminating:

[If] a theological proposition is one that says, “To be saying the gospel, let us say F rather than G,” and if the gospel is spoken in language *and* by more embodied sorts of signs, by sacrament and sacrifice, then we must expect theology sometimes to take the form of ritual rubrics, to take the form “To be saying the gospel, let us *do* F rather than G.”¹⁹

For Jenson, this comment comes after his proposition that the meaning of the atonement can only be properly understood not by theological explanation but by the liturgy of the sacred Triduum. This intuition strikes me as perfectly consonant with that of the *Speculum*, and indeed the wider tradition of medieval commentary. Its author takes for granted that liturgy — not just “the liturgy” in a grand, idealized sense, but the details of

¹⁹ Robert Jenson, *Systematic Theology, Vol. I: The Triune God* (Oxford University Press, 1997), 190.

ritual rubrics — simply *is* a kind of theology, a mode of theological signifying. To a certain extent, modern liturgists accept this insight, for the quest to render the liturgy “meaningful” surely falls under the motivation of allowing it to more fruitfully communicate certain theological or moral or anthropological propositions. But this is a secondary (“narcotic”) approach missing the thrust of the *Speculum*’s liturgical primacy. The liturgy just means (much in the way that music just means), and it does so whether or not its meaning is intelligible or translatable. Indeed *what* it means is ineffable to the extent that it is the doing of certain things that signify. One cannot simply skip the sign in pursuit of its idealized meaning hidden behind. One can inquire into the mystery, pry open its mystical sweetness, but one can only do so through direct engagement with the sign.

The phantom metaphysical real presence in today’s signs cannot be realized or re-discovered through explanation, but through actual presence. The kind of mystical explanation of the *Speculum*, as well as the whole mystical life it points to, only becomes possible in a context that *uses* signs, that lives with them as the norm rather than seeing them as a kind of code needing to be constantly explained or translated. If the Church, in the *Speculum*’s understanding, *is* meaning, and the maker of meaning, rather than the external interpreter of meaning, she must live and act as if things are meaningful rather than waiting to see whether they are meaningful. She must, like in Herbert’s vision of heaven, “sit and eat,” even when — perhaps especially when — she cannot yet fully understand what she is eating.²⁰ No doubt the historical development of doctrine bears

²⁰ George Herbert, “Love (III),” available widely in the public domain, quoted from the Poetry Foundation online:
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44367/love-iii>

this out in all sorts of ways, not least in the Eucharist. As does even the most routine pastoral experience: an infant baptizand does not need to know what baptism “means” to receive it; my five-year-old son’s desire to receive Jesus in the sacrament is adequate, for now, and it is only through becoming accustomed to so doing, by being personally ritualized and symbolized through the habit of the Church’s signs, that he will be able to gradually unfold their mystery and thus meet God, at the last day, face to face.

As a final note, the *Speculum*’s mystical vision preserves for us a profound hope, despite today’s endless deferral of meaning, because the Church’s mysterious identity can never be separated from the wine of Christ’s divinity. However much she is interrupted in her signification of the ways of God — however much, we might add, she is interrupted by the failure of her members — the mystical sweetness remains. After all, God’s grandeur endures, not just in nature, but in the signifying economy of the Church. It is always there, waiting to be investigated and understood so that it can be better loved:

And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs —
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.²¹

²¹ Hopkins, “God’s Grandeur.”

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APPENDIX

MAKING THE LITURGY MEANINGFUL

A basic critique, sometimes implicit and sometimes explicit, runs through much of the foregoing dissertation in relation to 20th century liturgical reforms and their accompanying pastoral or theological explication. I have hesitated to interpose this modern conversation too heavily onto a discussion of 12th century theology, though no doubt the elephant has made its presence in the room clearly enough. The main lines of critique run as follows. In bringing forth the *Speculum*'s deeply mystical and, indeed, eschatological approach to ecclesial signification, a variety of contrary approaches necessarily lurk in the background. Foremost among these is the villainous (from the perspective of my author) attempt to make out of the liturgy a kind of mechanistic transaction. In the 12th century such an approach might be found in the theoretical sophistry of the “dialecticians” referenced in the *Speculum*'s chapter on the Mass. A person following this temptation would find in the Church's signs not the interior sweetness leading to eschatological enjoyment but rather a kind of denuded spiritual facticity; he would be interested more in the mechanics of how to consummate the marriage than in the pleasures of signification in the nuptial bed.

In the 20th century, I would argue, the mechanistic approach to the liturgy takes, somewhat surprisingly at first glance, two rather different forms. The first is the explanatory impulse to make everything in the liturgy “mean” something in a straightforward and reductive way. Here I share some of the critical skepticism of certain modern liturgists mentioned above who decry the “historical” or “dramatic” character of liturgical commentaries that see the whole mass as a reenactment of Calvary. To be

honest, I remain doubtful as to how common this supposed infelicity really is in practice. I can attest that I have seen excerpts from parish newsletters and bulletins explaining how the actions of the priest mimic the actions of Christ in his Passion, though I can find no such examples easily available in print or online.¹ Perhaps the cryptic arch-nemesis of the modern liturgical project then really is just the old liturgical commentators of the Middle Ages with their dramatic allegorical exegesis. If so, I submit that the modern interpreters overstate the case, for, at least as far as the *Speculum* goes, “dramatic reenactment” as an interpretive category can really only take us so far. The actual practice of the commentary tradition, and certainly of the *Speculum*, is much more flexible than the kind of rigid drama that we rightly wish to deny.

With that said, there is a real tendency to explain the liturgy that risks obscuring the liturgy and its sweetness. As a case in point, I would draw attention to an interesting pamphlet from 1964 found in the Liturgy and Life collection of Boston College’s Burns Library: “A Suggested Commentary for the Services of Good Friday and the Easter Vigil.”² The commentary is meant to explain the newly revised liturgies of Holy Week, “to help the congregation comprehend the meaning of the ceremony.”³ One understands, in that context, the need to introduce congregations to what is essentially new. Yet the desire to explain comes across as strikingly heavy-handed at points. Imagine, on Good Friday, as the sacred ministers enter in complete silence to prostrate themselves before

¹ None, at least, that perfectly demonstrate the imagined problem. Still, searching for “the meaning of vestments” or “the meaning of the mass” can bring up a host of web content, much of which will at least hint at the dramatic or representative elements of the liturgy.

² The commentary is anonymous but bears the *nihil obstat* of Robert J. Sennott, P.A. and the *imprimatur* of Richard Cardinal Cushing of Boston, March 19, 1964. Digitized by the Internet Archive in 2016 and available here: <https://archive.org/details/suggestedcomment00unse>

³ *Ibid.*, 1.

the stripped altar, a kind of television-style commentator standing at the lectern and reading this descriptive gloss:

The celebrant and his ministers are vested in sorrowful black. In silence they proceed to the altar and then prostrate themselves before it in an attitude of prayer. The congregation now kneels and with bowed heads should think of all that Christ suffered for man's salvation.⁴

Lest we think the commentary merely a print aid for the faithful in the pews, the rubrics clearly explain that it is meant to be read aloud as the rites happen. Surely this is a moment when the desire to explain actually overshadows the performance of the liturgy itself; silence is literally replaced with a commentary on the idea of (now banished) silence. While, in some ways, the commentary tradition was concerned with “helping the congregation understand the meaning of the ceremony,” the recent tendency seems to move this explanatory impulse into the actual performance of the liturgy, almost as if it were a preschool “show and tell” exhibition.

The second form of the mechanistic approach to the liturgy comes as a kind of foil to the first. Rather than offering detailed explanations of new or arcane rituals, here the impulse is to simplify or revise liturgy itself to such an extent that such explanatory commentaries – whether medieval or modern – are no longer necessary. Arguably, this was at least one of the impulses behind much of the modern liturgical movement, whether the process leading up to the Missal of Paul VI or the various reform liturgies in other communions (such as the 1979 Book of Common Prayer in the American Episcopal Church). The simplification impulse remains an active, easily-observable phenomenon on the ground in many churches, whether in liturgy committees, pastoral councils, vestries,

⁴ Ibid., 2.

conferences, or informal conversation. I cannot count the number of times that I have been told by a colleague, a lay leader, or a bishop, that this or that rite or ceremony should not be attempted because it is not “meaningful to the people.” I do not mean to say that any such revision or simplification is unwarranted or vicious, simply that it represents, often, the same mechanistic assumptions of the explanatory model.

Two short articles from recent years in the *National Catholic Reporter* offer useful examples. In one, the article begins, “Southeast Asian liturgists say new church feasts need to be added to liturgical calendars while religious symbols that have no meaning in their area need to be replaced.”⁵ In another, Thomas Reese writes, “Current liturgical worship requires that we park our scientific minds at the church door and enter into the pre-scientific world of our ancestors when we pray.”⁶ In both cases it is assumed that the liturgy has no intrinsic meaning but is rather a way of conveying some *other* meaning behind it. This represents the same kind of mechanistic spiritualizing of the explanatory approach, for it assumes that there is a “meaning” independent of rite that needs to be conveyed and that will be conveyed if only we can explain the ceremony well — or if only we can reform the ceremony so that it is more communicative — or if only we can simplify the ceremony so that it comes across as more relevant. The “meaning” is, presumably, available in some other way, else we could not have these conversations; liturgy is merely a convenient and traditional means of dissemination.

⁵ “Liturgists call for meaningful feasts, symbols,” *National Catholic Reporter* 45.25 (October 2, 2009), 6.

⁶ Thomas Reese, “Modern eucharistic prayer: the 21st century needs an approach to liturgy that carries meaning after the impact of Darwin, Einstein and Hubble,” *National Catholic Reporter* 53.20 (July 14, 2017), 1a.

I argue, following the *Speculum*'s theology of the sign, that these two contrary modern impulses fail to encounter truly the gift of the Church's signifying economy. They treat the mysteries less as gifts to be enjoyed than as information to be possessed, discrete items of grace-transfer to be analyzed, mastered, and improved by the curious. While the pastoral instinct to make the Church more accessible and comprehensible is admirable in its way, the question looms: What, exactly, do we seek to understand and make more accessible? Grace, in whatever form we can get it? Or, alternately, a uniquely felicitous conjunction of grace with nature? Along with the *Speculum*, and probably the mainstream medieval tradition, I submit that the latter is better than the former. If the Church needs missionary introductions in this third millennium, she needs introduction to who she is in all her temporal and corporeal splendor, not merely to what she "means."